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From Tenderfoot to Golden Eaglet

A GIRL SCOUT STORY

By

AMY E. BLANCHARD

Author of "A Girl Scout of Red Rose Troop," "Lucky Penny of Thistle Troop," etc.

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FRANK T. MERRILL

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BOSTON CHICAGO

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FROM TENDERFOOT TO GOLDEN EAGLET

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Foreword

THE increasing numbers of Girl Scouts all over the country leads to an increasing demand for information about them. It is sometimes from rather unpromising material that a good scout is made. To demonstrate this, to show what benefits come from obeying the laws, to encourage girls who are but half-hearted scouts, and to prove that none need fail of becoming a Golden Eaglet who is faithful to her set purpose, this story of Joanne Selden is written.

A. E. B.

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From Tenderfoot to Golden Eaglet

CHAPTER I

THE STOWAWAY

JOANNE was leaning on the deck's rail watching the loading of freight. The black, perspiring men made much ado about it, and Joanne did not much wonder, for it seemed heavy work. She was not particularly interested in the boxes and bales, but presently she did see something which specially attracted her attention, and she leaned far over the rail to catch a last glimpse of a little black pony which came along with a dash once he gained his footing.

"Take care, Joanne," her grandmother called from her steamer chair in which she was already established, "don't lean over too far."

Joanne came back to the perpendicular. "Oh, but Gradda, you should have seen the darling pony that just came aboard; he was so much more interesting than all those bunches of bananas and crates of stuff. At first he didn't want to come and planted his feet as stubbornly as a mule with his head up and ears back;

that was when they put him on the barge to bring him to the steamer; then they hoisted him up by a strap over the side. He must have been scared, poor dear, but now he is safe, I hope. He is such a darling little fellow, bigger than a Shetland, but rough like one."

"Why didn't you call me to see all this?" asked her grandmother.

"Why, I was so excited and so afraid I would miss something that I forgot. I wish I had a pony like that."

"You couldn't ride it, my dear, if you had."

"But I could learn. Whose is it, do you suppose? I wonder if it is going to a new home and if its people are on board. I'm going to ask the captain when I get acquainted with him. There is a lot of freight, isn't there? I don't suppose we can start till it is all on board."

"We needn't have come down so soon," remarked Mrs. Selden, "but that is just the way at the small ports; it takes forever to get ready to start. Probably we shall be here the rest of the day. You'd better sit down and rest, Joanne, and not wear yourself out by rushing around."

"But, Gradda, there are hours and hours ahead when there will be nothing to do but rest; I shall get too much rested."

"Well, don't get overheated," charged Mrs. Selden as she watched the slim little figure return to her place at the rail.

A pale, thin, dark-haired, dark-eyed little person was Joanne, possessed of an exuberance of spirit and an enthusiasm which often outran her strength, so that her grandmother was continually curbing the excess of energy.

Presently she returned from her point of lookout to say: "I'm going to hunt up Grad. He can find out whose is the pony."

"Don't get into mischief," warned Mrs. Selden, picking up the book lying open in her lap.

"I won't," returned Joanne dashing off.

She met her grandfather on the stairway. He had an open paper in his hand, and looked a little troubled although there was a smile hovering about his lips. "Well, Pickings," he began—one of his names for Joanne was Slim Pickings, shortened to Pickings—"where are you bound?"

"Just going to hunt you up, Grad," answered Joanne. "I want you to find out who that darling pony belongs to."

Her grandfather puckered up his lips in a whimsical way. "I don't believe any one can tell you better than I can."

"Oh, but why do you say that? Please tell me."

Her grandfather made no direct answer, but asked, "Where is your grandmother?"

"Out there on deck in a steamer chair."

"Come along and let's find her."

Joanne linked her arm in her grandfather's and to-

gether they appeared before Mrs. Selden. She looked up with a smile. "Well, doctor," she began.

He dropped in her lap the open paper he had been holding. "What do you make out of that, madam?" he asked.

She bent her gaze upon it, then looked up with a puzzled smile. "What's it all about, Gregory?" she inquired. "I can't quite make it out. My Spanish might be up to it, but the handwriting baffles me."

Dr. Selden settled himself in the chair by her side and took possession of the paper again. "Well, it seems that I am responsible for one more passenger than I bargained for."

"What do you mean?" asked his wife.

The doctor spread out the paper on his knee and ran over the contents in glib Spanish, Joanne leaning on his shoulder the while.

Before he reached the last line she cried out excitedly: "The pony! the pony! That is what *jaco* means, isn't it? Not the little black pony, Grad, not that, is it? Oh, Grad, did he give it to you?" She plumped down on her grandfather's knee and tried to take the paper from him.

"Here, here, miss, go slow," he cried. "That document is not for you. Now keep still while I explain. You remember that man Paulino Lopez whose son I doctored? Of course I couldn't take any fee for a thing like that, but that does not suit my friend Lopez, so here comes this note, to the Señor Doctor, with the

pony begging that I will accept the gift from my 'grateful servant, Paulino Lopez de Machorro who kisses my hand.' He has raised the little beast from a colt, it seems, and when I went to his house offered it to me with his house and all his possessions. Knowing the Spanish habit of placing one's entire establishment at the disposal of the merest acquaintance, I refused to accept, which was the proper thing to do. He placed himself at my feet theoretically; I answered in kind and I supposed that was the last of it. But, no, here comes this; the pony is below, the man who brought him has returned and here am I in a quandary. Now, what in the mischief is to be done? We have no stable in Washington and who would look after him? I don't see how we are to keep him."

"Of course we can't," agreed Mrs. Selden.

Joanne flung herself wildly upon her grandfather. "Oh, please, please," she cried. "I'll take care of him; I'll do anything if you'll only keep him."

"You!" exclaimed her grandmother scornfully. "What do you know about horses?"

"But I could, I could. I'd feed him and water him. I'd curry him and I could learn to ride him. Oh, Grad, when kind heaven has sent such a gift like manna from the skies could you have the heart to refuse it?"

"I suppose I shall have to make a pretense of accepting," responded her grandfather doubtfully. "It would never do to send the creature back. Lopez would be hurt to the core, mortally offended, in fact.

He would probably denounce me as one of those boorish Americans who has no idea of courtesy. No, the little beast will have to complete his journey; we can't pitch him overboard. Meanwhile we'll decide what is to be done with him. Here, Joanne, don't make a spectacle of yourself like that. Get up." For Joanne had prostrated herself in Oriental style at her grandfather's feet.

She rose, however, at her grandfather's bidding and went over to her grandmother. "Goodness me, Joanne," said that lady, "your hands are as cold as ice. I do wish we could keep you from getting so worked up."

"But who wouldn't be worked up, when a darling pony is thrust upon one?" argued Joanne.

"You'd be more liable to be worked down in such an event," remarked her grandfather laughing. "Quiet yourself, Joanne, or I shall have to send you to bed with a hot water bottle."

"I'm quiet, really I am," protested Joanne.

"Of course it is an exciting thing for her, you must admit that," put in Mrs. Selden, taking her granddaughter's part. "She has every reason to be excited; you would have been at her age. You're not far from being so now," she added slyly.

Encouraged by this Joanne put in her plea. "Won't you take me down where I can see him, Grad?" she begged. "Of course he's yours not mine, but as he is really one of the family I at least should be introduced

to him. I'm afraid he'll be lonely among entire strangers and we must make him understand that we are his friends."

"All right," responded her grandfather, rather glad of an excuse to visit the little charge so unexpectedly placed in his care.

A docile but fine-spirited little creature they found him, already in high favor with the sailors, the stewards and deck hands. He rubbed his nose against Joanne's shoulder when she spoke caressingly to him, but turned from her with a low whinny when Dr. Selden spoke to him in Spanish. "Chico, chiquita, que bueno jaco," he said.

"What did you say to him?" queried Joanne all intent.

"I said 'Little one, what a good little pony.'"

"I believe he understood. You must teach me to say that to him. I mean to learn more Spanish; yes, I intend to be very proficient."

Satisfied that they were leaving the pony in good hands the two went up on deck again. Before long the last lighter was relieved of its freight and soon the vessel was plowing through the blue waters leaving adobe houses and waving palmettos behind them. Joanne watched the little port fade from sight in a flare of sunset light, and then gave her attention to her fellow passengers whom she had scarcely noted before.

Her grandfather, a retired surgeon of the navy, her

grandmother, a dainty little body, with Joanne, their only grandchild, had been spending the winter in the West Indies where they had gone mainly for Joanne's health. She was a frail child from the first. Her father had died in the Philippines, her mother, none too robust, soon followed him, and the little girl was taken in charge by her grandparents who doted on her, but were perhaps a little over anxious and over particular, so that she was never allowed to rough it and knew little of the outdoor sports which most girls enjoy. She had studied at home with a governess, losing much time because of real or fancied illness, yet she had picked up much information from a grandfather who had travelled all over the world and knew many things not taught in books. By reading much Joanne had gained more knowledge, so she was by no means an ignorant young person in spite of having studied few school books.

Restless child that she was she paid many visits to the little pony between the time the vessel left her port and the following morning, sometimes alone, sometimes in her grandfather's company. Between whiles she took careful survey of her fellow passengers hoping to see some one her own age of whom she could make a companion, but all appeared to be much younger or much older. The nearest approach to an acquaintance was begun with a lad a little older who smiled genially at her when she paced along the deck with her grandfather or rushed impetuously by her-

self as she tried to see how many circuits she could make within a given time.

This boy was sitting by a lady whom Joanne had noticed from the first. She, too, had smiled at the little girl who had smiled back. "I like that lady," she told herself. "She is so handsome and has such kind eyes and such a lovely smile. I'd like to find out who she is. I suppose the boy is her son. I like him, too; he has the same kind of smile. He looks rather serious when the smile flashes out like the sun from under a cloud. I'd like to tell him about the pony."

But if the arrival of the pony was an exciting incident of the voyage a still greater one occurred the next morning when one of the ship's officers came to where Joanne was with her grandparents, sitting still for a wonder.

"Dr. Selden?" said the officer.

"I'm the man," responded Dr. Selden.

"Would you be good enough to come below, sir?"

Up jumped Joanne. "Oh, there's nothing wrong with the pony, is there?" she cried. "He was all right just after breakfast. I gave him a lump of sugar. I hope it didn't disagree with him."

The officer's grave face relaxed into a smile. "Well, no, I can't say there is anything wrong with the pony;" he emphasized the last word.

"I'll come," said Dr. Selden getting up.

"Oh, please, Grad, I'm coming, too," declared Joanne.

Her grandfather looked inquiringly at the officer.

"That is as you say, sir," the man answered the look by saying.

The two men started off, Joanne following close at their heels. She was sure in spite of what the officer said that there was something afoot which concerned the pony even though there might be nothing the matter with his health.

The officer led the way to the captain's room where, with eyes half frightened, half defiant, stood a begrimed, frowsy, half-clad little lad, mumbling out replies to the captain's questions.

The captain arose as his visitors came in. "Good-morning, doctor," he said. "Sorry to trouble you, but we thought you might be able to help us out of a little difficulty. This your granddaughter?"

"My granddaughter, Joanne."

The captain held out a hearty hand. "Sit down, won't you?" he said, yielding his chair to Joanne. "I've no doubt you'll be interested in this affair, too. One of our men," he went on, addressing himself to Dr. Selden, "discovered this boy this morning. He had stowed himself away somewhere in the hold. Do you happen to know him? You speak Spanish, probably."

"To a certain extent," Dr. Selden replied looking the lad over critically. "What is your name, *muchacho?*" he asked in the language mentioned.

"Pablo Lopez," returned the boy.

"Son of Paulino Lopez?"

"Si, señor."

The doctor nodded. "Yes, I remember; you are the boy I treated. Why are you here? Why have you run away from home?"

"It is the little pony, señor, the small one who is my always friend. I cannot be apart from him. No, it is not possible, I come that where he go so I. You are so good. I tell myself that the Señor Doctor who was so kind as to take away that agony in the ear he will not send me back; he will permit me to go back with him to take care of Chico." All this was poured out in voluble Spanish, beseechingly, tearfully.

"Humph!" The doctor looked at the captain. "This is a pretty kettle of fish, isn't it?" he said. "He'll have to go back on the next ship, of course. Meanwhile I will be responsible for him. I suppose you can manage to give him a place to sleep and something to eat."

The captain's lips relaxed under his short moustache. "I don't exactly see where you are responsible, doctor," he remarked, "and of course we can't let him starve, can we? He can bunk in somewhere; that's easily arranged. We asked you to see him because we thought you might be able to identify him, as it was your pony he was concerned about. Certainly he must be returned to his parents. You know them?"

"Ye-es, after a fashion," the doctor replied. "You see I happened to perform a slight service for them.

In some way or other a grain of corn had penetrated this boy's ear and had begun to sprout, causing him intense pain. One of the waiters at the hotel learned that I was a surgeon, informed this Paulino Lopez, who was a relative of his, and they begged that I would see the boy. Out of sheer humanity I couldn't refuse. I went out to where Lopez lives, extracted the corn and in a few days the boy was all right." The doctor paused.

"But where does the pony come in?" asked the captain.

"That is the sequel. One is bound to get some sort of boomerang if he is too soft-hearted. I'm not practising, as you know, and anyway I would have no right to take a fee, besides who would for a little thing like that? As I told you I went out to the Lopez ranch, saw a swarm of half naked children and a horde of black workmen. This Lopez insisted upon giving me this pony then and there, since I wouldn't take a fee. I refused, of course, knowing the Spanish grand manner of offering gifts, but here comes the little beast after all when I have no use for him, and now appears this boy whom we don't know what to do with. Pretty hard lines, isn't it, in return for a common, every-day bit of benevolence?"

The doctor was so testy that the captain laughed. "Well," he said, "some persons might not think so. I'm glad you can tell us something about the boy. I thought maybe you could. We'll see that he gets back

home all right." He turned to the boy. "You stay on the steamer till we get to New York, then we send you back home by next steamer. Understand?"

The boy looked bewildered, his lips twitched, his hands twisted nervously. He cast an imploring look at Joanne who was observing him closely. His big, mournful eyes questioned her, then he plumped down on his knees before her, pouring forth a string of Spanish, only a little of which she could understand. Still, what she did gather was enough to make her jump up from the chair impetuously and go to her grandfather, clasping his arm till he should interrupt his talk with the captain long enough so that he might listen to her.

"Grad, Grad," she said excitedly, "you know you said you couldn't keep Chico, that's his name, the boy says—you couldn't keep him because there would be no one to look after him. I said I would, and you laughed. Now, you see, comes this boy in answer to my prayers. He's just sent from heaven like the pony. I've always been perfectly crazy for a pony, and I'll be ill, I will, I will, if he is torn from me." She burst into tears.

Her grandfather looked down at the excited face and then passed his hand over the girl's hair. "What would you do with such a nervous, excitable little body?" he said to the captain, who shook his head as if that were a question he couldn't answer.

"You said—you said—you'd think it over," sobbed

Joanne, " and here when everything arranges itself so wonderfully you turn a deaf ear to my plea."

The captain gave a little chuckle as the doctor turned a whimsical glance upon him.

" There, there, child," said the doctor soothingly, " there is no use in making tragedy of this. We can't do anything now, here on the high seas anyway. We have no intention of throwing the pony overboard and the boy after him. They've both got to stay on board till we dock. In the meantime we will see what can be done. It isn't a matter that can be decided in a moment. I suppose the boy's parents are crazy because of his absence. We'd better send them a wireless, eh, captain? "

The captain nodded. " We'll see to that."

" Come then, kitten," said her grandfather to Joanne. " It is all right. I'll tell the boy that we will see what can be done. Now go to your grandmother. Better wash off some of those superfluous tears first. I'll come up after I have settled some further matters with the captain."

So Joanne dried her eyes and nodded to the boy, calling upon her small stock of Spanish for a word of comfort. *"Paciencia! Paciencia!* Pablo," she stammered, and with a bright smile at the captain, chasing away her tears she ran to her stateroom.

CHAPTER II

THE LOVELY LADY

THE news of a stowaway had reached the upper deck before Joanne arrived there. She had quite recovered her composure by this time, and, as usual after one of her excitable outbursts, she was turning her dark cloud to show the silver lining. It was fortunate, she told herself, that there were some days before the vessel could reach New York, and in that time, probably she could coax her grandfather into keeping both Pablo and Chico. She remembered that Dr. Selden had said that Paulino Lopez had a swarm of children, so why should he not be pleased to have one of them provided for? This pleasant thought caused her to flash a sudden smile at the friendly boy now standing by his mother's side.

This time the boy did more than smile; he spoke. "Say," he began, "have you heard about the stowaway? Is there really one?"

"Oh, yes, there is," Joanne halted in her walk. "He is ours. I have just been down to see him."

The boy turned to his mother. "Well, what do you think of that?" he said. Then, to Joanne, "Tell us about him, won't you?"

Joanne moved over to where he stood.

"This is my mother," he said. "My name is Bob Marriott. What's yours?"

"Joanne Selden," was the reply.

"Sit down, won't you?" The lady indicated a vacant chair by her side. "My son has been telling me about the little pony you have below."

"He isn't exactly mine," responded Joanne; "he is Grad's—that's what I call my grandfather. I couldn't say grandfather when I was little, so I always called him Grad. He is a dear, the pony, I mean, though my grandfather is, too, for that matter."

Bob laughed. "I've seen him and I think he is fine—the pony, I mean," then coloring up, "of course your grandfather is, too."

Then they all laughed and felt very well acquainted.

"So the fine pony is your fine grandfather's," began Bob's mother. "However, I suppose that is the same as if he belonged to you, isn't it?"

"Well," answered Joanne rather doubtfully, "perhaps so, if Grad decides to keep him. You see he came most unexpectedly, as if he'd dropped from the skies. I'll tell you about it." So she launched forth into the story of Chico which, of course, included that of Pablo, ending up by saying: "So you see poor Grad is in quite a pickle. He has two things on his hands that he doesn't know what to do with, three if you count me."

"But why you?" asked Mrs. Marriott interestedly.

"Because you see my father died when I was a baby and my mother when I was four years old, so I have lived with my grandparents most of my life. I'm rather delicate and have to go south in the winter or to California or somewhere like that. This year we went to Bermuda first, then off to other places in the West Indies and to some queer little ports. Now that Grad has retired from the navy he can go along, too, which is rather fortunate for Gradda and me, for we have had to go wandering off alone. We usually don't, however, for there are always some navy people going along at the same time."

"Don't you go to school?"

"Yes, at least I've had a governess. I had a French nursery governess first, then an English governess, but now I have none at all. I should like to go to school. Maybe I shall if we are to live in Washington. I don't know; that is one of the makings up of his mind that Grad is bothered about. There he comes now. I must go and find out what he has to say about Pablo."

This was the first of many talks which Joanne had with these two. She had never known boys very well, and Bob was a revelation to her. He was a Boy Scout, in the first place, he played the violin in the second and in the third he had a number of girl cousins of whose doings he told Joanne, making her sigh enviously as she wished she could do some of the things they did.

She expressed this wish to Bob one day when the two were leaning on the rail watching the churning of the water in the wake of the steamer. "How I'd love to play outdoor games and go camping and do all those things your cousins do," she said.

"Well, what's the matter with your getting out and doing them?"

"How could I?"

"That's an easy one. Join the Girl Scouts."

"Oh, tell me about them."

"They're Scouts as near like Boy Scouts as girls can be. Our organization was started in England by Sir Baden Powell, and his sister started the Girl Scouts, then Mrs. Juliette Low got the idea and brought it over to the United States. The movement has spread so that now there are hundreds and hundreds of Girl Scouts all over the country, and I tell you they are just fine. My mother was captain of a troop, but she had to give it up."

"I'm going to ask her to tell me about her troop, do you call it? I love that. My father was a navy man, you know, and it does appeal to me, troops and captains and things. My father was only a lieutenant for he was very young when he died."

"Of course mother will tell you about her troop. She'd love to, for if there is anything mum's daffy about it is the Girl Scout idea."

So Joanne sought out Mrs. Marriott and listened attentively while she was being informed of the Girl

Scout activities. "I think it must be the finest thing to be one," she commented at last.

"It certainly is fine and dandy to be a Boy Scout," Bob put in, "so it must be just as fine for a girl."

Joanne was very thoughtful for a moment before she said: "I'm afraid my grandparents wouldn't like the idea."

"Pooh! Why not?" queried Bob.

"Oh, because they don't like me to do conspicuous things; they'd object to my marching in a parade, for instance."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Bob again. "You'd be just one of a bunch, all dressed alike and no one would notice you particularly any more than if you were one potato in a bushel."

Joanne laughed but immediately looked serious again, then she went on: "They'd be scared to death for fear I'd overtax my strength. Gradda is always talking about me overtaxing my strength, and charging me not to take cold and all that sort of thing." She turned to Mrs. Marriott. "I wish you'd get acquainted with Gradda; she's Mrs. Gregory Selden, you know. You could get to talking about how interesting and fine it is to be a Girl Scout and get her used to the idea gradually. It would never do to spring it on her suddenly; she'd get all ruffled up like a hen with one chick."

"I'd like very much to meet your grandmother," returned Mrs. Marriott. "Won't you present me?"

Joanne looked up from under her dark lashes. She wasn't quite sure whether her grandmother, being a very particular lady, would like the idea of meeting a perfectly strange person of whom Joanne could tell her nothing except that she had made the acquaintance in a very unconventional way. However, she reflected, that she did very often pick up acquaintances in travelling, and her grandmother had followed them up or dropped them as she felt disposed. So she replied politely: "If Gradda admires you as much as I do she'll be delighted. I picked you out that first day as the dearest-faced person on board."

Mrs. Marriott smiled. "Thank you for that very nice compliment," she said quietly.

Joanne fidgeted around for a few minutes. "Let's go now," she said at last.

"Go where?" asked Bob.

"Over to Gradda; we may as well get it over."

Mrs. Marriott laughed, but she gave Joanne's hand a squeeze. "You are simply delicious," she exclaimed.

Joanne wondered why, but jumped up, settled her cap upon her curly head and led the way to the other side of the deck where her grandmother sat. Dr. Selden was pacing up and down in company of another man. Joanne paused in front of Mrs. Selden saying: "Gradda, dear, I want you to know my friend, Mrs. Marriott, and this is Bob, her son."

Mrs. Selden removed her eye-glasses and looked up with faint suspicion at the tall, handsome woman be-

fore her. "Oh, Mrs. Marriott," she said, "I have heard Joanne speak of you. Won't you sit down? Joanne, take that rug of your grandfather's out of the way, and—Robert, is it? I'm afraid there is not another vacant chair for you."

"Oh, never mind, Mrs. Selden," returned Bob, quickly lifting the rug from the steamer chair and tucking it around his mother when she sat down. "Joanne and I will just walk while you and mother talk, that is, if you don't object."

"Not in the least," replied Mrs. Selden graciously, pleased with the boy's courteous manner.

"I'm glad you said that," remarked Joanne as she and Bob turned away. "Now Gradda will talk about me, which she wouldn't do before my face."

That is precisely what did happen, for Mrs. Marriott tactfully led the way to the subject. "I was attracted to your little granddaughter when I first saw her," she began. "She has such a bright interesting face, rather intense at times."

"Yes, she is too intense, I'm afraid," responded Mrs. Selden. "She is not strong but is nervously active, and I find it difficult to curb her nervous energies which outweigh her physical powers."

"Then," returned Mrs. Marriott, "it would seem a good thing to build up her physical strength."

"That is what my husband advises. He advocates an outdoor life, but how is the child to be properly educated if we were to live in the country? I could

not endure the isolation and where would she find proper companionship, a matter so important now that she is growing beyond childhood? She has had governesses, but now that the doctor has retired we have about decided to live in Washington and send her to school."

"There are excellent schools in Washington," remarked Mrs. Marriott.

"So we hear. Do you recommend any special ones?"

Mrs. Marriott rapidly turned over in her mind the schools of which she knew, then mentioned one which encouraged its pupils to belong to a troop of Girl Scouts whose meeting place for rallies was the school's gymnasium, and presently the subject of this organization was brought up. While this was being discussed Dr. Selden joined them, and soon the three were animatedly talking over schools and schoolgirls in general and Joanne in particular.

This was the beginning of more than one conversation upon the same subject, so that by the time the steamer docked it was almost settled that Joanne should try the Everleigh school, though the matter of her joining the Girl Scouts was left open.

Meanwhile the story of the pony and Pablo had become generally known and every one was interested in the pair, all hoping they would not be separated.

The little pony had begun life with wild mountain companions, many of whom, from time to time, were

captured and brought into the market-place to be sold. Chico and his mother were among these, but the wild, little mother refusing captivity, managed to get away, but in her mad efforts to escape, stumbled into a hole, broke her leg and was shot. Chico, who had tried to keep up with her, gave out at last, after making a good flight. Paulino Lopez bought the little creature for a mere song, took him to his home, where he became a great pet and Pablo's chief companion. In time he became as gentle as a kitten and docile enough to offer no objection to having a saddle put upon him or to be harnessed to a rough cart. He was strong and sturdy, much like a Shetland pony, and even Mrs. Selden, after having been persuaded to go down to see him, observed that he had "a very engaging personality."

At this comment Dr. Selden gave Joanne a sly wink which encouraged her to believe that Chico would remain in the family.

As for Pablo's future, that was still an open question which was not answered till some weeks later.

At the dock Joanne parted from Bob and his mother. She and Bob had become good comrades while for Mrs. Marriott she had acquired the worshipful feeling which a girl of fourteen often feels for an older woman, and "my lovely lady," was the way Joanne always spoke of her. At parting she threw herself into Mrs. Marriott's arms sobbing out: "I must part from you! We must part and I may never see you again!" She tremblingly took from

her finger a little forget-me-not ring which she thrust into Mrs. Marriott's hand saying: "Please keep this to remember me by." Then, after watching mother and son go off in a cab, she turned her attention to the landing of Chico.

The little pony came ashore much more readily than he had gone aboard, perhaps sensing the fact that his voyage was over and that he would now have the freedom of dry land. Moreover, this time he was led by his comrade, Pablo, who was clothed in a decent suit of Bob's clothes, donated by Mrs. Marriott.

"Where will he go now?" inquired Joanne linking her arm in her grandfather's.

"That's what I must find out," he said. "Such a nuisance having a responsibility like this thrust upon us."

"Oh, Grad, Grad," cried Joanne, "there's Cousin Ned." She had suddenly caught sight of a well set up young man behind the barriers.

"Good!" responded her grandfather. "Just the one I'd most wish to see." He hurried up to the gate calling heartily: "Good boy, Ned! Just the very one I want. Can you wait till we're through with these customs?"

"Sure can, uncle," returned the young man.

Joanne waved her cousin a greeting and then rushed off to where her grandmother sat forlornly, if patiently, on a trunk. "Gradda! Gradda," cried Joanne, "Cousin Ned Pattison is here. He came down

to meet us. Isn't that fine?" Her excitement and pleasure at the new arrival completely chased away the tears which had attended her parting with the Marriotts.

In due course of time the customs were done with and Cousin Ned was permitted to join his relatives. "Well, Ned, my boy," said his uncle, "it's mighty good of you to give us this surprise."

"Thought I'd combine business with pleasure and run on to New York for a few days. Had some matters to look up and made it convenient to time it so as to be here when you all got in. Going right on to Washington, uncle, or do you linger in this mad city for a while?" He smiled down at Joanne.

"Well," returned Dr. Selden, "the trouble is that I'm tied up in the matter of a boy and a pony."

His nephew stared. "What?"

"Fact. I've got to find a place for them. Queer sort of dunnage, but they were forced upon me," and Dr. Selden proceeded to tell the story of Chico and Pablo to which Mr. Pattison listened with close attention.

"Why don't you ship them right on to my place?" he said at the conclusion of the tale.

Dr. Selden laughed. "Where would you put a pony in an apartment house? In the dumb-waiter?"

It was his nephew's turn to laugh. "Pshaw! I forgot that you didn't know that I was a landed proprietor, that I had acquired a farm."

"Really?"

"Sure thing. I have a dandy place about twenty miles above Washington on the Potomac. I can take care of your pony, Jo." He smiled down at the little girl.

"But," said Joanne plaintively, "he isn't mine; he's Grad's."

"Same thing," returned Cousin Ned with assurance. "I would be glad, too, to take the boy," he said to his uncle. "Help is none too easy to find these days and an extra pair of hands would be mighty welcome. How old is this chap?"

"Twelve or fourteen, I should say. He is rather small, so it's hard to tell."

"Good enough; he's old enough to do a lot. Just you leave it all to me. Did you say you were going to stay over or not?"

"I suppose I shall have to till we get this matter straightened out, though I'd like to get off to-morrow if possible."

"I reckon we can fix it up. I must be here for a couple of days, and can look after your live stock till I go, then I can take them right along with me. Meanwhile I know a man that will look after them. Where are they, by the way?"

"Over here," responded Dr. Selden. "No, Joanne, you must stay with your grandmother."

So Joanne watched the two men go off, and then sat down by her grandmother to wait their return.

After what seemed, and really was, a long time she saw them coming back talking earnestly.

"There's bound to be a lot of red tape," she heard her grandfather say, "but I'll get in touch with the consul—I know him personally—and no doubt he will be able to hurry it up."

"All right. I'll meet you at the hotel," replied Cousin Ned, and hurried off.

In a few minutes Joanne and her grandparents were seated in a taxicab and a little later found themselves in a hotel from which they departed on the second day following.

Then came days which were exciting enough for Joanne; the selecting of a new home, the prospect of school life, the anticipation of spending week ends and holidays on Cousin Ned's farm, all these were too much for Joanne who, at the end of a week, went to bed with a headache and was treated as an invalid for several days longer.

But she emerged from this durance vile the better for the rest, and one Monday morning entered school with high hopes if with palpitating heart and nervous tremors. However, at the end of another week she had found congenial companions, had chosen one special friend, had made up her mind that she must become a Girl Scout whether or no, and was already working at her Tenderfoot tests.

CHAPTER III

HARD AT IT

THE girl whom Joanne settled upon as the one she would like for her best friend was Winnie Merryman. Joanne observed her across the big schoolroom that first morning. She was the exact opposite of the dark-haired, dark-eyed, pale-faced Joanne, being rosy and fair-haired, with big turquoise blue eyes and lips which smiled a friendly greeting to Joanne as, a little scared, the latter took the seat assigned her and glanced around the room.

At recess Joanne, too proud, and still too scared, to make advances, stood off with head up and a don't care look on her face. Winnie at once made her way over to the new pupil. "I don't believe you know any of the girls, do you?" she said.

Joanne shook her head. "No, I don't know a single one."

"Then come and eat lunch with me. I am Winifred Merryman. I can tell you about the other girls and you can meet some of them so you won't feel that you are among entire strangers."

This was the beginning and by Friday afternoon Joanne and Winifred were sworn friends, moreover Joanne knew most of the other girls, by name at least, and was in high favor with a number of them, being considered something of a heroine because of her travels and her somewhat unusual experiences.

"Just think," said Betty Streeter to Esther Rhodes, "she speaks languages, French and Spanish, and she's been to all sorts of queer places like Hawaii and the West Indies."

"Yes, but she's awfully backward in some of her studies; math. and Latin, for example."

"Yes, but she's very bright; I heard Miss Hunter say so; she'll catch up."

"She looks very delicate."

"I believe she is, but I heard her say to Miriam Overton that she had always been coddled, carried around in cotton wool, as it were, but that now she was going to join the Girl Scouts and have more outdoor life. That should bring her up if anything can."

"Perhaps," returned Esther doubtfully.

It was true enough that Joanne had declared that she intended to become a Girl Scout although as yet, her grandmother's consent had not been gained. It took a little diplomacy to get this, but Joanne was tactful, and first, by coaxings and cajolings, won her grandfather over to her side, then one day she brought home the rosy Winnie who was certainly a brilliant example of an outdoor girl.

"Of course," Winnie told Mrs. Selden, "I don't suppose my robust appearance is all due to scouting, but mother thinks ever so much can be laid to that. I know myself, that I get flabby and lazy and headachy when I stay indoors too much; so do lots of the girls. Why, look at Miriam Overton; she used to have indigestion and couldn't walk a mile without giving out. Now she's given up eating so much candy and takes more exercise so she can do a five mile hike with any of us."

So in the face of these and other arguments Mrs. Selden finally gave in, especially when she learned the character of the girls who comprised Sunflower Troop. However, it was not at once that Joanne was able to attend her first rally, for, being not only a high-strung, nervous young person, she was likewise a very ambitious one who went at her studies with a rush and a determination to be outdone by no one, so that more than once she was kept at home because of headaches which followed fits of weeping when she thought herself unable to keep up with her class, or failed in some of her work. On such occasions her grandfather bore her off to Cousin Ned's farm from which she returned with renewed confidence and quite ready to start in again with fresh vigor.

So at last it came about that it was a very enthusiastic girl who perched upon the arm of her grandfather's chair on the evening of the day when she attended her first rally.

"Just think, Grad," she exclaimed, "there are ever so many tests I don't have to bother about. You have already taught me how to tie more than four knots, so I can check those off. The girls were so surprised that I knew so many, but when I told them I belonged to the navy they understood."

"You belong to the navy?" Her grandfather softly pinched her cheek.

"Why, of course. Haven't you always belonged, and didn't my father? Of course I knew the names of governors of states, only the District of Columbia doesn't have any, and Washington hasn't any mayor. As for the history of the flag and how to fly it, I'd be a poor sort of granddaughter to a navy man if I didn't know that much. There are ten Scout laws, and I think I know them perfectly. Don't you want to hear me say them, Grad?"

"Most certainly."

Joanne jumped down and stood rigidly before her grandfather. "First comes the promise," she began; "I must promise to try to do three things: To do my duty to God and my country. To help other people at all times. To obey the laws of the Scouts. The laws are these: 'A Girl Scout's honor is to be trusted. A Girl Scout is loyal. A Girl Scout's duty is to be useful and to help others. A Girl Scout is a friend to all and a sister to every other Girl Scout. A Girl Scout is courteous. A Girl Scout keeps herself pure. A Girl Scout is a friend to animals. A Girl Scout obeys or-

ders. A Girl Scout is cheerful. A Girl Scout is thrifty.' "

"Fine! Fine!" cried her grandfather when she had finished. "I hope my little Puss will be able to keep those laws."

"It's going to be pretty hard to keep them all but I shall try very, very hard, for I am just crazy to become a Golden Eaglet."

"And what's that, pray?"

"Well, you see first you're a Tenderfoot, then you are a Second Class Scout, then a First Class; just like the middies, you know. Well, when you have passed the tests for a whole lot of things, fourteen or something, you can become a Golden Eaglet. You can get badges for other things, too. I think I can pass the test for Interpreter and I know something about signalling and I can swim a little, but there are ever so many more; I will show you the list in my handbook. Oh, Grad, it is a perfect cinch that I can go to Cousin Ned's, for that's where I shall practise horsemanship and farming."

Her grandfather threw back his head and laughed heartily. "I see you becoming a farmerette," he said.

"Oh, but I can be, really I can. Now don't you laugh at me, you dear old blessedness," she dashed over to give him a hug, "for I'm counting on you for first aid and instructor in a lot of things."

"Better not place too much confidence in my powers."

"Oh, but of course I can, Mr. Doctorman, for where could I find any one who could tell me more about Red Cross stuff and Civics and all that?"

"Well, well, we'll see. Do you know this is the very first day that you have forgotten to ask about Pablo, being so interested in this new idea, of course."

"Oh, Grad, tell me, have you heard at last from his people?"

"Well, chatterbox, if you will give me a chance to get a word in edgewise I might be able to tell you something."

Joanne promptly drew up a chair and sat down in front of him, folding her hands in her lap. "I won't say one word till you say I may. Please now go ahead and tell me."

"Very well, then; I have heard from Pablo's parents and they give their consent to the boy's remaining in this country. They really seem glad of the opportunity which has come to him. The father writes that the fact that one of his family can be provided for in this great United States is to be considered in the light of a blessing."

"And ——" began Joanne, then put her finger on her lip and went no further.

"So your Cousin Ned, finding the boy really quite a willing, capable little chap, is ready to do the best he can for him, hoping in time that he will prove an apt and reliable assistant. So, that's settled."

Joanne could restrain herself no longer, but flung

herself into her grandfather's arms. "And Chico! Oh, Grad, you will let me learn to ride him."

"Why, yes. I thought we'd decided that," he said patting her shoulder.

"But Gradda hasn't said it was settled."

"Nonsense! Gradda won't object."

"Oh, but she does, she does. She's afraid Chico will run away with me and break my back or neck or something. She can't get over the fact that he was born wild."

Her grandfather laughed. "Then we shall have to calm her fears, and let her be convinced that whatever he may have been in his infancy he is now a very gentle little beast."

"Oh, you blessed darling! I'm so glad you've retired and are going to stay at home always, for now I shall have you to come to my rescue in any emergency." She threw her arms around her grandfather's neck and kissed him ardently.

"Here, here," he cried, "don't eat me up. Do you mean you expect me to come to your rescue if Chico runs away with you?"

"Oh, no, no," Joanne shook her curly head. "I never expect Chico to run away with me; I mean when it comes to tiffs with Gradda. She is a dear, of course, but she is always so anxious about me that she makes my life miserable. She wants me to take nice, orderly little walks around the block and never to cross the street alone for fear I'll be run over. She is afraid

I'll get rough and suffragettish if I do the stunts the other girls do, and she's always feeling my hands to see if they are cold and asking if I am in a draught and where is my appetite and did I sleep well last night and am I warm enough, hadn't I better put on a sweater and do I think I should study so hard and —— Oh dear!" Joanne gave a long sigh.

Her grandfather shook his head thoughtfully. "I understand, Pickings. She is too apprehensive; it's her way, but maybe we can get her used to a different point of view; it will have to be done gradually, of course. Meantime this old fellow will keep an eye on you and if he finds you are overstepping bounds he will pull you up short. It is to be understood that both you and your grandmother must obey this doctor's orders."

So was Joanne launched, her grandfather her aid and abettor in many of the activities heretofore denied her. She passed her Tenderfoot tests successfully and started out enthusiastically to acquire the knowledge necessary to become a Second Class Scout, which rank she intended to lose no time in gaining.

"You're a perfect sponge," declared Winnie Merryman, herself a First Class Scout. "I never saw any one soak up information as you do. Here you are forging ahead in every direction like a steam engine."

Joanne laughed. "Steam engines don't usually go in every direction; those old army tanks do that. Besides, you see, I knew some of the things already.

There are the points of the compass; of course I know those and how to box it, then I know a lot about steamers and tides and things, and what to do in case of fire. Grad taught me those ages ago. Can you ride horseback, Win?"

"A little; at least I can stick on."

"Then you can ride Chico. Did I tell you that Grad has promised to give him to me for my very own as soon as I have learned to ride? He is such a darling, a little rough mountain pony. The cut of his jib is more like that of a horse than a pony such as you usually see."

Winnie laughed. "You use so many funny expressions, sailor-like ones."

"That's because I belong to the navy," returned Joanne proudly, at which speech Winnie laughed again.

Joanne chose to ignore the laugh and went on: "If we fall off we won't fall very far, but I don't intend to fall off; I mean to stick no matter what. We'll go out to Cousin Ned's some day and you can see Chico and Pablo, too. You can go, can't you?"

"Oh, Jo, I'd just adore to go, but"—she hesitated, "shouldn't I wait for an invitation from your cousin?"

"Of course not," returned Joanne positively. "Any of my friends will be entirely welcome. Cousin Ned has no children and he dotes on me, so if I invite you it is the same as if he did. It is such a dear place.

You wouldn't believe anything so wild could be within twenty miles of Washington; great cliffs and forests and rushing rapids in the river."

"It sounds perfectly entrancing," declared Winnie.

"There is a farmhouse where the manager lives," Joanne went on, "but that isn't where we would stay. Cousin Ned has built the cunningest fishing lodge, sort of like a bungalow; he and some of his friends did most of it themselves, and you never knew anything so clever. It is built of hewn logs with a huge fireplace made of the stones on the place. They just rolled them down from the top of the hill. The chimneys are made of discarded ice cans, the kind they use in factories where they manufacture ice; they sort of telescoped them together for only a makeshift, and found they served so well they have left them just so. The water comes from a never-failing spring half-way up the hill, such clear, sparkling water; it is piped down into the house which is at the foot of the hill on the border of the canal with the river beyond. Cousin Ned has a canoe and a motor-boat. Sometimes we go part way in his car and the rest of the way in the motor-boat; I like that way best."

"Do you go up often?" asked Winnie, much interested.

"Well, I've been up only twice," said Joanne truthfully, "and once we went in the motor-boat part of the way."

Winnie laughed for Joanne had spoken as if her

visits were of great frequency. "Could our troop hike up there?" she asked.

"It would be a pretty long hike," replied Joanne doubtfully, "but we might take a train to the nearest railway station and walk from there. It would be about nine or ten miles and up a lot of hills."

Winifred considered this, then presently she broke out with: "I have an idea! I tell you what I think would be perfectly great: we could go up on a canal boat and it would be such fun to go through the locks."

"Wouldn't it?" returned Joanne enthusiastically. "I have always been crazy to go through those locks. Cousin Ned took me over to the one nearest his place and showed me how they worked. It would take a pretty long time to get up there, I suppose, but we wouldn't mind that. I'll find out from Cousin Ned if it would be possible, and let you know. I don't suppose it would be best to say anything to the other girls till we know whether or not it can be done."

"No, I suppose not," agreed Winnie, "but I hope you can find out soon so we won't have to burden our minds with a secret any longer than necessary."

"I'll find out the very first chance I get," promised Joanne earnestly, and remembering that Joanne was not one to let the grass grow under her feet, Winnie was satisfied that she would push the matter.

An opportunity to question Mr. Pattison and also to make her first attempt to ride Chico was vouchsafed Joanne no later than the next Friday when Cousin Ned

appeared to bear her off with her grandfather for a week end in the country.

"Wild flowers are out, fish biting," announced Cousin Ned. "Now's your chance. If you want to take advantage of this fine weather while it lasts, you'd better come up. Aunt Alice, you'll come, won't you please?"

Mrs. Selden raised a hand in protest. "Oh, Ned, dear, it is very kind of you to want me, but I am not fond of roughing it, and from what I hear I am afraid I shouldn't enjoy it. Then, too, one is so liable to take cold this time of year in making sudden changes."

Mr. Pattison nodded understandingly. He had scarcely expected his invitation to be accepted. "You'll come, won't you?" he turned to his uncle, "and Jo, of course."

"Do you think it would be wise to take Joanne?" inquired Mrs. Selden. "Of course it is just as you say, Gregory, but if she should take cold ——"

"She won't," Dr. Selden interrupted. "Let her take plenty of warm things and her rubbers. I'll carry along a medicine case, if you say so, and I'll be there to doctor her if she sneezes."

Joanne looked at Cousin Ned and hid a little chuckle as he drew down his mouth and gave a sly wink.

So, after receiving many charges not to get her feet wet, not to sit up late, not to get tired, not to eat anything which might disagree with her, Joanne set off with her grandfather and cousin to spin through the

wide streets, across a bridge to old Georgetown and then up the river road where lovely vistas of the blue Potomac and the Virginia hills beyond met her eyes when she looked that way. It was a good road most of the distance until they turned off into a private way. At the gate leading to this Joanne spied two figures.

"Look, look!" she cried, "there are Pablo and old Unc' Aaron. They are watching for us."

Sure enough, as soon as he saw them coming, Pablo sprang to open the gate, smiling and showing his white teeth as they passed through, while old Aaron took off his nondescript hat and bowed to the ground. "Howdy, Pablo! Howdy, Unc' Aaron," cried Joanne standing up and waving to the two.

But the pair were soon left behind and the car sped on to draw up presently outside a little rustic fence beyond which was the bungalow. Joanne was the first to hop out, stumbling over her grandfather's feet in her eagerness to reach the ground. Once there she danced about in sheer delight, treading the new, upspringing grass beneath her feet, exclaiming, questioning, and finally hugging her cousin as he came forward. "Oh, isn't it the dearest spot?" she cried. "Look at that shining river! Listen to the rapids! Oh, there is a bird! Where are the wild violets? Oh, there's a canal boat. Are we going to eat here or up at the farmhouse?"

"For an animated visitor commend me to Joanne," said her cousin, going up the steps to open the door.

"Which would you rather do, Jo, have a picnic supper here or go to Mrs. Clover's?"

Joanne considered this for a moment, hesitating between the prospect of Mrs. Clover's abundant table heaped with products of the farm, and the simpler fare the picnic supper suggested. "I tell you what I think would be best," she finally decided, "to have our breakfast and supper here and our dinner at Mrs. Clover's."

"Wise old owl," declared Cousin Ned. "I'll look over the larder and see what we can have."

Joanne followed him to the kitchen where he opened a cupboard and looked over the contents. "Let me see," he said; "here's a lot of canned stuff and groceries. I tell you what, Jo, I think we'd better have ham and eggs with some griddle cakes. Unc' Aaron is a jim dandy at baking griddle cakes."

"But that isn't picnicking," said Joanne.

"No more is it, but it is the kind of picnicking we generally have up here, for I'll have you to know that nobody is a better cook than old Aaron. How does the bill of fare strike you?"

"I think it is great," replied Joanne, "and I am so hungry I could eat it raw."

"Good! I'll tell Aaron to give us a double supply. Here he comes now and Pablo with him. That boy is Unc' Aaron's shadow. They have taken the greatest shine to each other, and Pablo is beginning to talk the darkiest English you ever heard."

Unc' Aaron came in bowing and scraping. "I jes' thought I'd ruminate around and require of yuh what was yo desires, Mistah Ned," he began.

"My desires are for some ham and eggs, some cream and milk and butter. We'd better send Pablo up to the house for them while you whirl in and make the fire here. We're nearly starved and we are counting on you to get supper for us, some of those famous griddle cakes of yours, and see that you are not stingy with them."

"Yass suh, yass suh, I gits yuh alls up a fine suppah, an' does it puromptily, yass suh, I speeds aroun' an' represents dat suppah in de shake or two of a sheep's tail."

"All right. Go on with your representing while I light a fire in the dining-room."

"Oh, can't I go with Pablo to get the eggs and things?" begged Joanne, "and, oh, I do so want just to glimpse Chico."

"Go along, then, and ask Mrs. Clover if she hasn't some jam or some sort of sweet thing she can let us have. She'll talk you to death if you let her, so if you want to see Chico you'll have to head her off and hurry back."

Pablo, who had already received his instructions from Unc' Aaron, was starting off to the farmhouse. Joanne hurried after him. "I'm going too, Pablo," she called.

Pablo waited and they went up the hill together.

"Do you like it here?" inquired Joanne, who had no idea of keeping silence.

"I like ver' mooch," replied the boy.

"Tell me about Chico. He is well?"

"He is bust weeth the health," returned Pablo gravely.

Joanne turned her face toward the river in order to hide the broad smile which this speech produced. Then she said, still striving to hide the smile, "You are learning English very quickly, aren't you?"

"I think," returned Pablo complacently.

They hurried through their errand as rapidly as the voluble Mrs. Clover would allow, and went back bearing, not only the butter, eggs, milk and cream, but a loaf of fresh sponge cake, a comb of honey and a jar of preserved cherries. They deposited these things on the kitchen table where Unc' Aaron was slicing the ham, already on hand, and then they went off to the stable to see Chico eating his supper and looking as sleek as needs be.

They were not allowed a very long visit to him, however, for very soon they heard a bugle call, and looking back saw Cousin Ned standing on the porch sounding the summons to supper, and down the hill they went at as rapid a gait as stones and brambles would permit.

"These are the finest griddle cakes I ever ate," declared Dr. Selden as he helped himself to his third supply.

"I mean to ask Unc' Aaron to teach me to make

them," said Joanne. "It will be a fine thing for me to do when I go out camping with my Girl Scout troop."

"And I suppose your poor old grandfather will never have a chance to test your powers," remarked Dr. Selden in pretended dejection.

"Oh yes, I will try them on you first," returned Joanne airily, which brought a laugh from her grandfather.

She lost no time in interviewing Unc' Aaron in order to get his recipe, but she gave up getting a written form, for all he could tell her was that he "jes' beat up some aigs, den I sloshes in some buttermilk ef I has it, er some milk ef I hasn't, an' stirs in de flour."

"But how much?" questioned Joanne, bewildered at this very casual way of making cakes.

"Well, honey, dat 'pends upon how many dey is to cook fo'," was the answer, and this was all the satisfaction she could get, so for the present she gave up the idea of emulating Unc' Aaron in the preparation of griddle cakes.

CHAPTER IV

CHICO

UNC' AARON had lived on the place all his life. As it changed owners he went with the property as one might say. His little log cabin, where he lived alone, was near the road and not far from a small negro settlement. He was one of the few now remaining of the old-fashioned type who preferred the old order to the new, and was a decent, law-abiding, self-respecting old person. He knew where the best nuts were, where the largest persimmons grew, where the wild creatures hid, where was the safest swimming pool, and to what point to direct fishermen who came up for bass fishing. All these things he was teaching Pablo, whom he took under his wing from the moment of his arrival. As soon as Mr. Pattison became owner of the property Unc' Aaron instituted himself as general factotum, and took his position as a matter of course. He was always on hand to open the gate for the automobile when it appeared with a party of jolly week-enders, and to offer his services for any and all kinds of work. Joanne doted on him and he considered her a guest to be specially honored.

With her grandfather and Cousin Ned as instructors, Joanne was not long in feeling perfectly at ease on Chico, and was so confident that one day she said to Pablo, who to be commanded was to obey, "you may put the saddle on Chico; I am going for a little ride." Pablo adored Chico, but he also adored Joanne, who had plead his cause on shipboard, and whatever he may have thought, he would never stand in the way of her doing anything that pleased her.

So he watched her canter down the long lane toward the gate and then returned to his work of feeding the pigs.

Joanne had been gone but a short time when along came Unc' Aaron. He went into the stable and at once missed Chico.

"Whar dat dere Cheeky?" he inquired.

"Miss Joanne she have him to ride," responded Pablo.

"She ain't gone off de place, is she?" said Unc' Aaron.

"I am thinking she go to the road. No I know where."

Unc' Aaron raised his hands and moved them up and down shaking his grizzly head meanwhile. "Who say yuh saddle dat creetur?" asked the old man, turning a wrathful eye upon the boy.

"The young leddy say me do."

"An' yuh ain't got de sense to tell nobody she gone. My lan', boy, but yuh is foolish. Whar Mistah Ned?"

"He and the Señor Doctor make to go in the cano."

"In de canoe? Mebbe dey ain't gone yet. Trabble dem laigs of yo'n down to de lodge as fast as yuh can mek 'em go, an' give 'em mah espects an' ast 'em will dey wait twel I git dar. Hop lively, now."

Pablo understood well enough to set off on a run and came upon Mr. Pattison and Dr. Selden, to whom he delivered his message.

"What does the old chap want, I wonder," said Mr. Pattison. "It must be something important. I hope nothing is wrong. We'd better wait."

"I agree with you," returned the doctor. "I hope it is nothing about Joanne. I always feel that she is perfectly safe when she is with Unc' Aaron, as I supposed she was."

Just then the old man came up panting. "I hopes yuh gemmans escuse me," he said, "but de little leddy have gone off ridin' by huhse'f, an' dey some mighty mean trash 'roun' dese days. Ain't lak hit useter be when folks could go over de face of de yearth an' nobody moles' dem ner mek 'em afraid. She ain't use to ridin' yet, Mistah Ned."

"Which way did she go?" inquired Dr. Selden sharply.

"Ast de boy."

"In what direction did she go?" Dr. Selden said sharply to Pablo.

"I not know, señor. She go by the road to the gate. I see no more."

"We must follow her," said Mr. Pattison, starting on a run toward the stables. "We will get the horses; you go one way, uncle, and I will go the other."

In a few minutes the two were mounted and were off in search of the venturesome Joanne, who, meantime, had started out quite confidently to enjoy herself. The little pony went along quietly. The sky was blue, the air fresh and sweet, the woods a tender green. What more delightful than this free and glorious way of travelling? Up the road went pony and rider till they came to the parting of the ways.

"Now, which road shall I take, the right or the left? Which shall it be, Chico?" said Joanne. "I believe I'll let you take your choice; you'll probably choose the one most familiar to you."

She let the bridle fall loosely and Chico turned to the left. This road led through the woods for part of the way, but presently passed through a little settlement of poor-looking houses. Beyond this was a schoolhouse. Some distance further along Joanne came upon a group of rough-looking boys who, spying her and the little pony, could not lose an opportunity of teasing and lined up across the road as she approached, thus barring her way.

"Hey there!" cried the ringleader. "Where you going with your hobby horse? What do you feed the little runt on?"

Joanne drew rein and sat up very straight, her heart beating fast but her courage all to the fore. She was

considering what to do when one of the boys gave Chico a sharp cut from behind. This was something the little pony was not used to. He pranced nervously, but at a second cut he reared slightly. Joanne managed to keep her seat, frightened though she was. "So, Chico, so," she tried to quiet him.

"Get off and let us have a try at him," cried one of the boys who had been watching admiringly.

For answer, Joanne, her wits sharpened by the emergency, jerked Chico around quickly to head him away from the group. "Go, Chico, go!" she cried, giving him a slight touch of the whip, and off went Chico like the wind. Joanne clenched her teeth and sat steadily, the boys staring after her.

At the cross roads Dr. Selden had paused to examine the ground which might show the impress of Chico's hoofs and so indicate the way Joanne had gone. But before he had completed his examination down the road came horse and rider, Joanne's hair flying, her eyes sparkling, her face tense.

"Oh, Grad! Grad!" she cried at sight of him. "How did you know? How did you know?"

"Know what?" inquired Dr. Selden frowningly.

"About me and those horrid boys."

"So there were horrid boys," he returned accusingly. "What do you mean, miss, by dashing off this way by yourself? Who gave you permission?"

"Well, nobody," returned Joanne hanging her head, but looking up from under her lashes with a queer little

smile which suggested that tears were very near. "Nobody did because I didn't ask any one. Oh, Grad, I can ride, I can, I can. Did you see how I came flying down the road like the wind? I stayed on and Chico behaved like the darling he is. I adore him. No one can ever say again that I don't know how to ride, for I do."

"That much is granted," admitted her grandfather, "but there is this to be said: never, never do you go off alone. Remember. Under no circumstances must you. I forbid it absolutely. If you do so again, I shall have to sell Chico. Now tell me about the boys."

Joanne, now subdued by the threat to sell Chico, told her story in as few words as possible, then lapsed into silence while her grandfather added a postscript to his lecture.

In a few minutes they came across Mr. Pattison, who had met some one who saw Joanne come out the gate and ride in the direction Dr. Selden had taken. Then the story had to be told a second time and a second warning given which reduced Joanne to tears and so worked upon the feelings of her two cavaliers that they began to cheer her up and she arrived at the farm in quite a serene, though still humble, frame of mind.

On her way from the stables she took possession of her grandfather's hand and laid her cheek against it. "Grad, dear," she said, "I didn't really mean to do wrong; I just didn't think of anything but what fun it

would be to go cantering off all alone. I felt so free, like a bird. Please don't say anything to Gradda about those boys; she'd be scared to death in the first place and in the second she'd never want me to ride Chico again. After all, the boys were only teasing; they didn't do anything to hurt me."

"It isn't a matter to make light of," replied Dr. Selden, "but perhaps we'd better not tell your grandmother, for, as you say, she'd be frightened out of her wits and wouldn't sleep nights for thinking of what might have happened to you."

"But she needn't be afraid any more that Chico would throw me or run away with me. You might tell her that I really can ride, just to satisfy her."

Her grandfather smiled, but he promised.

It was a temptation to Joanne to tell the girls at school of her adventure, but partly because she was rather ashamed of it she did not tell, notwithstanding that she did confide to Winnie that she could ride like the wind.

But Winnie was more interested in learning whether there was a possibility of making the trip to the farm with the Sunflower Troop of Girl Scouts. "Did you find out from your cousin anything about it?" she asked eagerly.

"Oh, yes, it was one of the first things I asked him. He says we might be able to go by way of the canal; he is going to find out. There is a grain boat that comes down to Georgetown; he knows the man who

runs it, and he'll ask him. The boat is loaded going down but there is plenty of room going back. Cousin Ned says we can stay at the bungalow and welcome, for we couldn't make the trip there and back in a day unless we went by automobile, then we could."

"Oh, but it would be simply gorgeous to stay all night, such a weird experience. I'd adore it; so would the other girls. How many could we stow away?"

"Let me see," Joanne considered, "there are two rooms up-stairs with double beds; that would accommodate four, and there is a sleeping porch down-stairs where two cots are, and there are some extra cots, I believe, for Cousin Ned sometimes has quite a house party. I should think eight of us could be quite comfortable."

"Good! Miss Dodge will go with us, of course."

"Of course. We might get in nine by a tight squeeze, but I don't believe we'd better say we can care for any more."

"It is the most ravishing plan," exclaimed Winnie, giving Joanne a hug, "and I think it is perfectly dear of your cousin to let us come."

"I almost learned to make griddle cakes," Joanne told her, "but I couldn't get Unc' Aaron to give me any sort of recipe."

"Oh dear," sighed Winnie, "you make me just wild to go to that place of your cousin's. It is simply adorable to think of that dear old timey darkey and that fascinating Spanish boy. Do you believe we might

venture to tell the girls about it this afternoon? About the possibility of our going up there, I mean."

"I don't see why not," answered Joanne, "for we are bound to go sometime or other, if not in one way in another."

Joanne enjoyed the gymnasium at all times, but particularly when the troop of Girl Scouts met there with their captain, Miss Dodge, or her lieutenant, Miss Chesney. There were informal meetings, too, when Claudia Price, their Patrol leader, read them severe lectures at which some of the girls snickered, for they did not take Claudia seriously, and when she called them down for not paying their dues or for being behindhand in some of the duties imposed upon them, they were more often ready with excuses than with apologies.

A good many of the girls had arrived when Winnie and Joanne entered the room on this special afternoon. Some were sitting on the floor talking. Miriam Overton was "skinning the cat," Betty Streeter was worming her way along through a series of square spaces at the end of the room. Esther Rhodes was busy with some lessons for the next day. Miss Dodge had not yet come, but presently she was there and the order came to: "Fall in!" The girls scrambled to their feet, gave the salute to their captain, and the pledge to the flag, and the meeting went on.

Joanne loved the military part of it, the marching, the signalling and so on. She had begun to take spe-

cial exercises and was most ambitious to make a good showing on her measurement card. Already there was more color in her cheeks.

The business part of the meeting over and the regular drills, Winnie and Joanne waited their chance to broach the subject so near to their hearts. This came at last when the question of the next hike came up.

"Oh, Miss Dodge," said Winnie eagerly, "Joanne and I have the most heavenly plan."

"That sounds encouraging," said Miss Dodge. "Suppose you divulge it. I can guarantee that the girls will listen."

So Winnie divulged, turning to Joanne once in a while for information. Of course there was a great buzzing and exclaiming when she paused to take breath, and questions came thick and fast.

"Wait, wait, girls," said Miss Dodge. "Let's get to the practical part of this before we begin to talk of taking things to eat and all that. We cannot be at all sure that it would be feasible to go by canal. In the first place we shall have to find out how long it would take, and on what day this grain boat will make the trip. We should have to go on Friday afternoon and get back on Saturday, of course. If the boat did not arrive before the middle of the night I should not want to go on it."

Winnie and Joanne looked at each other. "We never thought of that," murmured Winnie.

"But if it does go on Friday afternoon, and we are

sure that it would get there before dark we could go, couldn't we?" spoke up Joanne.

"Oh, Miss Dodge, please say yes," coaxed Miriam.

"I can't, right off like that," Miss Dodge answered, smiling. "I shall have to investigate further. It sounds delightful, I admit, and I hope we can make the trip, but don't set your hearts on it."

"How soon can we know?" asked Esther. "We ought to fix on as early a date as possible, while the weather is mild, don't you think so?"

"Next Friday! Next Friday!" clamored several voices.

"I'll do my best," promised Miss Dodge. "If I can arrange it for next Friday I will." And with this the girls were obliged to be satisfied, and went off chattering excitedly.

Within a few days Miss Dodge found out that the plan would be feasible and there was wild rejoicing. Joanne, the originator of the scheme, was the most popular girl for the moment, and was constantly being interviewed, having to answer more questions than she had ever had asked her in all her life, and Cousin Ned, in his turn, was turned to till it was a wonder that he did not regret his offer of hospitality to such a bothersome party of girls. However, he declared himself to be greatly interested in the undertaking and promised all sorts of assistance, so that the girls told Joanne that he was adorable, and she quite endorsed this opinion.

"It is the luckiest thing that the boat goes up on

Friday," she said to Winnie, "though I suppose some other boat might take us."

"Oh, but Mr. Pattison knows this man so well, and besides, we might not be able to get any one else to consent to take passengers."

"Yes, I suppose that is true," acknowledged Joanne, "and some of the other boatmen are very rough and I don't believe Gradda would be willing I should go with any but this Dawson man."

"I can scarcely wait till Friday," declared Winnie.

"I think I should die of despair if anything happened to upset our plan," responded Joanne.

Winnie laughed. "You are always so tragic, Jo. You wouldn't die. I wouldn't either, though of course I'd be awfully disappointed, just as all of us would be."

This was on Wednesday. On Thursday the girls scanned the skies anxiously. "I don't like the look of those clouds," remarked Claudia as she joined Winnie and Joanne on their way home from school.

"Oh, but I don't believe they amount to anything," replied Winnie cheerfully; "they are only wind clouds, I reckon."

"Let us hope so," returned Claudia oracularly.

But, alas! alas! the next morning it was raining in torrents. Winnie, rain-coated and overshoed, was about ready to start for school when she was called to the telephone.

"Is that you, Win?" came a doleful voice.

"Guessed it the first time," came the cheerful response. "Do I address Miss Joanne Selden?"

"Yes, it's Jo speaking. Oh, Win, isn't it awful? I was never so disappointed in all my life."

"Judging from the teary quality of your speech I should say you were."

"Aren't you?"

"Of course I am, but I'm not going to cry about it. There will be other Saturdays and I reckon the bungalow won't burn down meanwhile; if it does we can camp out."

"I don't see how you can be so cheerful about it; to me it is simply tragic."

"Why, no, it isn't. It is a disappointment but it isn't a grief nor a disgrace. Better hurry up and come along to school where you can bury your woes in a stiff mathematical problem."

"But I'm not to go to school. Gradda says it is raining too hard and that she can't think of allowing me to go out," this plaintively.

"Oh well," Winnie didn't quite know what to say to this, for a Girl Scout to stay in for an ordinary rain was a situation she didn't know how to deal with. "Chirk up, honey," she said finally. "Practise some of your stunts for the next rally. I'll come in this afternoon. Sorry you aren't coming out. I shall miss you. Got to go off now. Good-bye." And she hung up the receiver.

Winnie's suggestion was a good one, for Joanne got

out her manual and sat down by a window overlooking the rain-drenched street. As she watched schoolgirls hurrying by with books and umbrellas she heaved a deep sigh, then opened her little blue volume. The very first words that caught her eye were "A Girl Scout is Cheerful under all circumstances. Scouts never grumble at hardships, nor whine at each other, nor frown when put out." The color rose to Joanne's cheeks and she turned over the pages rapidly till she came to the one which set forth the qualifications for a Second Class Scout. These she considered carefully, then she threw down the book and went downstairs humming a little tune and saying to herself: "A Scout goes about with a smile and singing."

She found her grandmother in the library with her fancy work. "Gradda," said Joanne, "how do you hem?"

"Why, my child, what do you mean?" returned Mrs. Selden looking up.

"Well, you see, Gradda, I've always hated sewing, haven't I? and have said I would never take a needle in my hand if I could help it, and now that I want to be a Second Class Scout in a hurry, that is one of the things I have got to learn. I must know how to make a buttonhole, or knit or crochet, sew a seam or hem a garment. The hemming sounded sort of easy, and I thought I'd begin on that. Will you show me how?"

"Indeed I will," replied Mrs. Selden with a gratified air; "sewing is a very ladylike accomplishment and I

am delighted that you want to learn. You have always been so opposed to it that I have not insisted, as perhaps I should have done."

"I suppose it will bore me to extinction," responded Joanne, "but I mean to do it or die. When it gets to the point that I can't stand it any longer I can fly at something else like the Morse alphabet or the semaphore one."

So instead of spending the morning in a state of doleful dumps Joanne busied herself with a needle, and, though she did throw her work on the floor in a rage several times, at last she came to the point of being quite satisfied with her really presentable hem and decided that it was enough for one day.

CHAPTER V

"THE END OF A PERFECT DAY"

IN the afternoon Winnie appeared rosy and smiling under her dripping umbrella. "Well, old weepy wapory wiper," was her greeting as Joanne rushed to meet her, "how goes it?"

"Fine," responded Joanne with as sunny a smile as Winnie's own.

"All over your doldrums? You great big baby, to cry at a little thing like that," continued Winnie closing her umbrella.

"How do you know I was crying?"

"Couldn't mistake that teary voice; the drops actually oozed through the telephone and ran along the wires till one fell on my nose."

"You ridiculous girl! Come in."

"I will for a few minutes, but I can't stay long, though I hope to take you back with me."

"Oh, dear, I'd love to go, but Gradda would never consent. If I couldn't go to school I couldn't go pleasuring. You see I left my rubbers up in the country ——"

"Careless child."

"Of course; I know that. Moreover I forgot to

tell Gradda, so when this morning came I did remember and there was no time to get others, so here was I miserable."

"You weren't a good Scout, you know, to go all to pieces like that just for a mere disappointment. You should have bucked up and have turned your distressfulness into opportunity."

"Just what I did," replied Joanne triumphantly. "I learned to hem."

"Good! so much the more must you come with me. The car will be here in a few minutes. Mother is going to stop for us on her way from down-town. So, you see, my child, you will not get those little tootsie-wootsies wet. Run along and tell your grandmother. I'm sure she won't be left a leg to stand on in the way of an excuse."

Joanne responded with a rapturous hug and flew off, returning very soon ready for the trip.

"Did you bring your sewing?" inquired Winnie.

"Why no. You didn't say to bring it."

"Didn't I? I meant to. The Sunflowers are coming over and we are all going to do sewing tests. The more proficient ones will direct the inferiors, and so we'll get along famously. I shall essay to make my first buttonhole."

"Oh, dear, I'm afraid I am a long way off from that, but I mean to get there. I'll go for my sewing bag. I never had any use for it before."

Off she went again, returning with the bag which

she held up in triumph. "Now, 'fess up, Win. Weren't you really awfully disappointed when you saw the rain this morning, and weren't the other girls?"

"*Naturellement, ma chère,* but I can safely say that I believe you were the only tear manufacturer in the lot."

"What did you do?" inquired Joanne remembering her red eyes and untasted breakfast.

"Oh, I said Bother! in a very large way, then I stamped around the room for a few minutes, threw things about a little, went to the window to be sure it was rain and not Moses out with the hose, then I said, Well, Winifred Merryman, it's up to you to be cheerful, I suppose. You must track up the puddles in your own back yard and smile, smile, smile. It's a long rain that has no turning."

Joanne threw herself into an armchair shouting with laughter. "I do think you are the dearest, craziest girl I ever saw! If it were not for you I suppose I should still be in a state of woe and would probably have to go to bed with a headache, but when you suggested that I should work up some test for the next rally it gave me something to live for, and when I picked up my manual what was the first thing that met my eye but that 'be cheerful' law, and naturally—well, naturally, I just was obliged and compelled to bid farewell to every fear and wipe my weeping eyes. Do you know that part of being a Scout never sank in

very deep before? I've been thinking all along of the tests and how soon I could earn badges and all that sort of thing. I forgot the character part, at least I knew it was important, but it didn't come home to me with a slam till to-day."

Winnie nodded. "It's about the biggest part."

"Yes, I know. I quite prided myself upon being honorable and loyal and all that, but I sort of sneaked out of giving much thought to the other laws. Now, I'll have you to know, Miss Merryman, that I mean to wrastle with them all. No more cry baby about me, if you please."

"That's the way to talk!" cried Winnie. "Miss Dodge says it often takes more courage to do little things like being cheerful and obeying orders or resisting the temptation to do some little mean thing, than it does to face big dangers, for, when the big dangers come you seem suddenly inspired with courage. One is moral courage; the other physical, and the moral is inside of you where nobody can see its workings."

"Dear me, I'm learning a lot," confessed Joanne with a long sigh. "I've never thought much about such things, but I see I shall have to if I am to be a good Scout and that is what I want to be."

"You will be, give you time," Winnie assured her with a loving pat. Then the car arrived and the two set off in high spirits in spite of the heavily falling rain.

Two or three girls had already arrived with their sewing bags when Joanne and Winnie entered the bright sitting-room of the Merryman home, and others soon followed. The last to enter was Virgie Ambler who carried in her arms a well-bundled up baby about one year old.

"For pity's sake, Virgie, where did you get that?" cried Winnie as Virgie deposited her burden on the lounge.

"Borrowed it, at least not exactly, and it's a him not an it. You see Mrs. Clary, who lives back of us, had to go out on an important errand and was at her wit's ends to know what to do with Master Guy, sweet name, Guy, so I offered to take care of him. I thought it would be fun to bring him here and we could all take turns in looking after him. It would enliven the party, you perceive, and give us all a chance of putting in some good Scout work. He is a friendly young person and not given to howling more than the law allows."

The girls all made a rush to divest Master Guy of his bundlings up, and questions came thick and fast with exclamations and compliments thrown in. "Isn't he a darling? How old is he? Can he walk? Can he talk? What a dear little head! What lovely long lashes! Um! Um! wouldn't I love to have such a complexion! Come to me, ducky darling. No, I'm going to take him first," and so on.

The youngster appeared to be quite undisturbed by

all this fuss, but scanned each face in turn and finally put out his arms to Winnie, who snatched him up and hugged him, dancing him up and down in her strong young arms till he gurgled with delight.

"You mustn't hold him all the time; you will spoil him," cautioned Virgie.

"Then what shall I do with him? Put him on the floor?" questioned Winnie.

"Oh, he might take cold," Claudia spoke up.

"I'll get a quilt or something," said Winnie, dumping the baby upon Claudia's lap and rushing off upstairs. Presently she reappeared with a comfortable which she spread out on the floor. "There!" she exclaimed, "he will be all right. Put him down, Claudia."

But no sooner was young master deposited than he set up a howl which rent the skies, and began hitching himself toward Virgie who perforce must pick him up in order to pacify him. "Now what's to be done?" she said looking around. "We shall spoil him if we hold him all the time and if we don't he yells like fury."

"Maybe he's hungry," suggested Winnie.

"No," Virgie shook her head, "he mustn't be fed out of hours, and even if he consents to stay on the floor he will hitch himself all over the place; that's his way of getting around. At home he has one of those pens that his mother can put him in."

"Well, why not build him a pen out of chairs?" was

Joanne's suggestion which was immediately adopted, and inside of this barricade the baby was placed, only to repeat his loud protests.

"Oh, dear," sighed Virgie, "I'd no idea babies were so much trouble. Much satisfaction we shall have trying to sew if he keeps that up. I'm sure I don't know what to do."

"Put him down again and let us take turns in trying to amuse him," Joanne made a second suggestion.

"Fine!" cried Virgie. "Of course we couldn't expect the poor little tacker to be content without toys or some sort of entertainment. Get in, Joanne, and try your powers. We'll take half hour shifts and see how it works, then no one will get exhausted, although," she added, "perhaps I'd better take him home and work out the problem by myself without drawing you all into it."

"Oh, no, no," cried the rest, "let this be team work. Don't think of such a thing, Virgie."

So over the barrier Joanne climbed and in a few minutes gurgles of delight showed how successful she was in making baby Guy forget his woes, then each girl took her turn and at last their charge was in such a good humor that when some one proposed that he should be supplied with some things to play with, he was so well satisfied with a string of spools, a tin pan and a spoon, that he was left to his own devices.

"I don't think that performance of his on the tin pan is particularly edifying," remarked Claudia.

"Then let's call it an accompaniment," said Winnie; "we'll all sing. No doubt he will like the added noise."

"Excellent scheme," returned Claudia. "What shall we sing, girls?"

"Oh, do let's sing a lullaby," said Betty Streeter, "'Sweet and Low,' for instance, then maybe he'll go to sleep."

They all laughed, but some one started up the song. However, this only encouraged the baby to beat harder upon his pan, so very soon laughter stopped this song, for, said Winnie, the accompaniment was anything but sweet and low.

The shadows were falling and pretty soon one girl and another gathered up her sewing and prepared to leave. Winnie displayed a fairly good buttonhole, Joanne viewed the last half of her hem with more satisfaction than she did the first, and decided that after all sewing was less of a bugbear than she had supposed, so she made up her mind to attempt a more ambitious piece of work which she could use as a test for her grade of Second Class Scout.

It had stopped raining, but Winnie insisted upon lending her a pair of rubbers, for Joanne declared she wanted to walk home since she had not taken outdoor exercise that day. Virgie bore away the baby who was persuaded to show off enough to shake a chubby hand in farewell, and the day which had begun so unpromisingly, ended in a gorgeous sunset.

Joanne walked home with Claudia Price who lived in her neighborhood. "Why weren't you at school this morning?" inquired Claudia.

Joanne explained, adding, "I didn't dream when I got up this morning that I should have really a busy, happy day. A few months ago I would be in bed with a headache after such a disappointment."

Claudia laughed. "Is that your way of doing usually? What spared you this time?"

"The Girl Scouts," replied Joanne gravely, "at least it was Winnie who set me on the right road. She called me a cry baby, which I was, and said I'd better work at some of my tests, a thing I hadn't thought of doing, and when I looked into my handbook I came face to face with the law which says a Girl Scout must be cheerful, so there you are. Win was so funny, too, that I realized how silly I was to take a disappointment so to heart. Of course it was a disappointment."

"It certainly was to all of us, but by this time our fun would be partly over, and now we have all of it still to look forward to."

"So we have; I never thought of that, but there are lots of things I haven't thought of. You see I have lived with grown-ups mostly and I am afraid I get to thinking about myself too much. It has never occurred to me till lately that I should think of what is best for other people. My grandmother humored me because I was delicate, and if my governess tried to make me do things I didn't want to do I had only to

cry and work myself into a headache and my grandmother would give in at once. I am just beginning to see what a mean, nasty way it was to act."

"Well, there is one thing," said Claudia cheerfully, "if you think it was a mean, nasty way,—I agree with you that it was,—you won't want to keep it up, will you?"

"No-o," returned Joanne a little doubtfully, "but I don't suppose I will turn into a lion of courage at once."

"But I suppose the attacks will become less and less severe," responded Claudia with a little laugh. "If you just take a dose of Girl Scout law when you find them coming on they will soon cease to be chronic. If you find the condition persists, just call up Miss Dodge; she will give you a prescription."

Joanne laughed. "You'd think with a doctor grandfather I wouldn't need one. He isn't quite as indulgent as Gradda, and really can be quite severe at times, though I can usually coax him into doing what I want."

Claudia shook her head. "Bad child; that's taking a mean advantage, and you mustn't do it."

"Oh, dear, no, I suppose I mustn't. It seems to me that being a Girl Scout means a lot more than just getting badges."

"Of course it does. It means character building."

"And health building. I seem a long way off from being even a Second Class Scout."

"Don't you believe it. It is a question of will. Make up your mind and then go to it. Why, my child, if you did but know it you are on the high road already."

"Why, Claudia, after this morning?"

"Don't say 'after this morning,' say after to-day. Honestly now, would you have looked at things last evening at this time as you are doing this evening? All things being equal, if the trip to your cousin's were planned for to-morrow instead of to-day would you dissolve into a weepy mess of tears when you found we couldn't go?"

"Well, no, I hope not. I'd try mighty hard to chirk up outside no matter how I felt inside."

"There! What did I tell you? I think you've made a big jump from babyhood into—what shall we say?—Girl Scouthood? Allow me as patrol leader as well as sister Scout to say that you need not be discouraged; we'll have you a Golden Eaglet yet if all goes well."

"Oh, Claudia!"

"Sure thing. Chirk up; you'll get there. I turn off here. Good-bye, and don't forget my parting words."

Joanne waved a farewell and went on with high hopes. "What darlings they are; even Claudia, that I was half afraid of and was sure I shouldn't ever be real friends with, is a perfect love. It's been a wonderful day. I believe, after all, that I am glad our trip

to the country is ahead of us instead of being half over."

She went into the house humming: "The End of a Perfect Day," and found her grandmother looking for her.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Selden, "I thought it was high time you were here. You didn't walk home without your rubbers, did you?"

"No, Gradda, Winnie lent me a pair of hers. Claudia and I saw the sunset from the bridge; it was gorgeous and the cathedral loomed up so grandly as we looked up Rock Creek. We went out of our way so as to see it all. I like Claudia."

"Did you have a good time, and have you had any return of your headache?"

"We had a great old time with a baby, and I have forgotten that I ever thought of having a headache. I don't mean to have any more."

"Oh, my dear, don't say that. I am afraid you will not outgrow them at once."

"Well, I don't mean to cry myself into them; that's what I mean. I should want to go back to bibs and feeding spoons if I did. I'm getting to be a perfect Pollyanna, Gradda." She gave her grandmother a hug and kiss, then went up-stairs continuing her song of "The End of a Perfect Day."

CHAPTER VI

EASTER EGGS

"ONE rainy Saturday is liable to be followed by another," said Winnie to Joanne as she was waiting for the latter to get ready for a meeting of the Sunflower Troop, "so I don't think we'd better count on that trip to the country yet a while. Moreover, next Sunday will be Easter and we must do something for the good of humanity between whiles."

"What are we supposed to do?" inquired Joanne, pausing in the act of adjusting her hat.

"Something orphanly, I imagine. We generally take them on at such times. I hope you're not going to weep this week because the country trip is deferred."

"You hush!" Joanne pounded Winnie with a pretense of wrath. "Of course I shall not. My point of view has moved several inches in the past few days, so I have leaped far beyond the weepy stage, I hope. The next thing I have to look out for is pertness. I can be awfully sassy, Winnie."

"I don't doubt it," returned Winnie with a grin, "but don't you hate a pert miss?"

"Oh, dear, do you suppose any one ever called me that?"

"Very likely," replied Winnie jauntily; she was nothing if not candid.

"Oh, dear," sighed Joanne again. "The war is over but the reconstruction stage isn't and I see where I've got to keep up the fight. I certainly do hate pertness, but also do I despise milk-and-wateriness."

"One doesn't have to be insipid and cringing to be perfectly respectful and courteous," responded Winnie. "For example, do you consider Claudia a meechin person?"

"Far be it from me to say so."

"Did you ever know her to be anything but courteous and gracious?"

"Well, no-o," Joanne admitted.

"Then, take back the pertness thou gavest, what is its smartness to me?" Winnie sang.

"Oh, Win!"

"I win, you win, we both win. Come on if you're ready." And off they went, arriving a little late but just in time for squad formation.

Miss Dodge had gone off on an Easter holiday, so her lieutenant, Miss Chesney, was in charge. She was a dark-eyed, alert little person, active and cheery, and the girls all liked her. When the meeting had arrived at the point of discussing Easter gifts she made the announcement: "We talked it over at the last Court of Honor and we think that eggs for our special or-

phans will be the best thing we can decide upon. Can each of you contribute two eggs?"

"Sugar, colored or just plain raw?" inquired Winnie.

"Plain raw, I think. Why can't we have a coloring party? You might bring the eggs to my house and we'll dye them there. Can you do that?"

"Yes, indeed," came in a chorus.

"Saturday morning, then."

This was agreed upon and then the girls fell to discussing the subjects most interesting to them and finally played games till it was time to separate and go home.

"If we could only get eggs direct from the country maybe we could get them cheaper and could bring more than two apiece," said Claudia. "Counting the two patrols we'd have less than forty eggs and we should have about fifty, four dozen, we'll say."

"But who would know where to go for them?" said Virgie. "I don't believe any of the country people we could reach would sell them any cheaper than we could get them in town, and there would be all the bother of going after them."

"Oh," spoke up Joanne, "I wonder if we couldn't get them from Mrs. Clover. She has lots and lots of hens and she is so far out of town that I don't believe she sends her eggs all the way in, and I doubt if they give her city prices at the country store. Besides she is the kindest thing and if she knew they were for the

orphans she wouldn't stick on the highest price, and you all know what the highest price is these days."

"Good scheme, Jo," cried Winnie. "Can you find out all about it, how much they'd be and how we can get them?"

"I think so. Perhaps they could be sent down on a canal boat. I'll talk to Cousin Ned about it. I'll write him a note and leave it at his apartment on my way home, then he's sure to get it when he comes in. I never know just when to catch him, so I'll tell him to call me up."

With this plan in view she went into the big schoolroom, where at her desk she wrote her note which ran this way:

"DEAR AND BLESSED COUSIN NED,

"I want to talk to you about eggs just as soon as possible. Will you please call me up at the very first oportunity you have after you get home and oblige

"your devoted Cousin Joanne."

She showed the note to Winnie into whose eyes came a little twinkle of amusement. "Now what's the matter?" asked Joanne in a resigned tone.

"You don't spell opportunity with one p but with two, and Jo, dear, you do write the scan'lousest fist, so childish, as if you'd just passed beyond pot-hooks and loops."

"Well," began Joanne protestingly, "he'll know

what I mean and that's the main thing, besides I don't care. I have just begun, really, for I hate to write, and never have done more than I could help. My governesses never insisted upon my writing out things as they do here at school. Then, too, lots of clever people write atrociously."

"That's not the point, you blessed little goose. I'll tell you something, make a confession, as it were. I used to feel just as you do till I had to write Miss Dodge a note, and when she saw how fearfully I muddled it she asked me what was the idea, and I answered much as you have done. Then she asked, 'Don't you want to write like a perfect lady?' or words to that effect. That gave me a jog and I began to open my eyes. 'You see,' she said, 'when you are older if you were obliged to write to a stranger and he or she were to see such writing and such spelling you would be set down as a perfect ignoramus.' Well, so you see that wasn't exactly my ambition and I went to it with a vim and now, if I do say it, I am rather proud of my secretarial powers."

Joanne shook her head dubiously. "I'll never come to that pass, I know."

"Maybe not, but you can at least improve on a mess like this." Winnie gave a contemptuous flip to the note on Joanne's desk.

"Oh, dear, Winnie, you are so brutally frank."

"Am I? I'm afraid I do go too far sometimes, but, Jo, my beloved little ducky dear, if you did but know

how anxious I am that you should stand above criticism it wouldn't worry you in the least when I jump on you in this way."

"Am I criticized?" asked Joanne anxiously.

"Of course you are, all of us are. Did you ever know a set of girls who didn't criticize?"

"I don't know many girls, at least not so very well, just those I have happened to meet in travelling about, and I know scarcely any boys. Gradda never liked me to play with boys, though there was one on the steamer when we came up from Bermuda, and she let me make friends with him; he was so nice, a Boy Scout, and we had fine talks. It was his mother who told us about the Everleigh school and the Girl Scouts. She is the most adorable person I ever met, the queen of my dreams. I took some snap shots of her and one I have had enlarged; I will show it to you some day if I think of it."

Winnie looked at her a little compassionately. "You haven't had much real home life, have you?" she said gently.

"Not so very much. Sometimes we have had a furnished cottage in the summer, but generally we have stayed at boarding houses and hotels in summer and winter. There seemed no use in having a settled home with Grad away most of the time, and with the need of going south in winter and north in summer. But now, we do have a home, a real one, and it is such a joy to all of us, especially to Grad and me. I think

Gradda cares less for it on account of the servant question. She feels so helpless when the cooks leave."

"That's where little Girl Scout Jo should come in."

"I don't see how I am ever to learn housewifely things when Gradda doesn't like me to go in the kitchen."

"Your chance will come," Winnie assured her. Then some of the other girls joined them and their talk was over.

It was that evening that Joanne was called to the 'phone by her Cousin Ned. "What's this about eggs?" he said. "My name isn't Hennery."

Of course Joanne giggled, then she explained.

"Fine scheme," declared Mr. Pattison. "We could use some fresh eggs ourselves. What's the matter with going up after them to-morrow afternoon?"

"Oh, Cousin Ned, do you mean me?" inquired Joanne joyously.

"Who else? Your Cousin Sue has other fish to fry, I know. Can you?"

"Just hold the wire a minute till I ask Gradda." It was scarcely more than a minute before she was back again and saying: "I can go. At first Gradda was inclined to say no, but Grad backed me up and so it is all right. What time shall I be ready?"

"About two o'clock. I think we can easily make it and get back before dark. If we don't there will be no great harm done; there's a good road." He hung up and Joanne returned to the library to find that her

grandmother had gone up to her room to write a letter and that her grandfather was alone reading the evening paper.

Presently the paper was flung aside and Dr. Selden looked over to where Joanne was toiling over the intricacies of a piece of crocheting. He watched her for a few minutes before he said: "Well, Pickings, how goes it?"

Joanne laid down her work. "It's very puzzlesome," she declared. "I can't make the rows come out even; they're either too long or too short, and yet I try to count the stitches. I'm afraid I'll never be an expert at fancy work. I think I'll make you a garment, Grad. What would you like?"

"A breakfast jacket or a Tuxedo wouldn't be bad," he replied with a quizzical look in his eyes. "Everything in the way of clothing is so high-priced now that I would be very grateful for any little help in the way of a coat of some sort."

"Now, Grad, you know I couldn't make a coat."

"You said a garment and isn't a coat a garment?"

"Yes, but it would be a funny looking coat if I made it, that is if I sewed it. When I learn to knit I might make you a sweater. Would you like that? You could wear it when you go up to Cousin Ned's to fish."

"I'd be delighted to have it. When do you think you will get it done?"

"Oh, dear, I don't know. I haven't even begun to learn knitting. Win said crochet was easier, but I

don't believe it is, at least not for me. Grad, how did you learn to spell and write as well as you do?"

"Oho! I thought you didn't think those accomplishments necessary. You've always maintained that you would use a typewriter, and that spelling didn't matter so long as one understood what was written."

"Yes, I know, but I have changed my mind. You see a lot of my school work has to be written and I get fearful marks sometimes just because I make so many mistakes and write so horribly. How did you learn? I love the way you write."

"Well, let me see. I shall have to go back fifty years or more when it was considered a part of every one's education to write a good hand. We had a special teacher at school and I remember laboring painstakingly to make my copybook the best in my class. As for spelling, it was a great thing when one could jump from the foot to the head of the class when a particularly hard word was given out. We used to stand in a row against the wall. Sometimes the whole school would be in the spelling match, and the last one left standing had outspelled the others, for as each one missed a word down he must sit."

"How exciting! I wish they would do that way now. It was like a play, wasn't it? Were you ever the last one left standing?"

"Yes, I was several times, as I remember it, but if I happened to be the first to miss a word how disgraced I did feel. I was very ambitious about my

writing and practised penmanship in the evenings after I had studied my lessons. My father, who was an exceedingly good penman, would set me a copy on my slate."

"I'm going to do that," declared Joanne, throwing down her crocheting. "I haven't a slate, to be sure, but I can use paper. Will you set me a copy, Grad? I'd love to write like you.". She fumbled among the papers on his desk and finally brought forth a large sheet upon which her grandfather amusedly set her a copy at which she labored till bedtime.

"That is a most ambitious child," said Dr. Selden as his wife entered the room after seeing Joanne tucked in.

"I am afraid she is too ambitious," replied Mrs. Selden. "I am afraid all these new interests are too exciting for her."

"Has she complained of headache lately?"

"No," returned Mrs. Selden after considering the question, "come to think of it, she has not for a long time."

"She tells me she is almost up to her normal weight and measurements."

"How in the world does she know?"

"She keeps a strict account on a card she had given her by her Girl Scout captain. Fine idea that Girl Scout plan."

"Yes, in some directions, but she wants to do such queer things like laundry work and cooking and such

things. I never learned them and up to the present have never had to cook a meal and I have always been able to find a laundress."

"Then you are very lucky if one may believe the tales one hears. Let her learn; it won't hurt her a bit."

Mrs. Selden lifted her eyebrows and shrugged her shoulders but made no reply. Being of a conventional make up, and unaccustomed to alter the standards of her youth, she could see no reason for allowing Joanne to do the things which she had never been called upon to do, and rather resented the fact that her husband approved of the modern point of view.

Dr. Selden picked up his paper again, but laid it down to say: "What do you think Joanne proposes to do?"

"I'm sure I don't know; something absurd, I suppose."

"First she proposed to make me a garment. I suggested a coat, but it came down at last to a sweater, and I firmly believe she will make it. Then she has a suddenly acquired passion for learning to spell and write well, and has been practising on a copy I set her. Where is it?" He picked up the paper Joanne had left on the table. "There, shows improvement already. Get that child headed the right way and there's no telling where she will bring up. We are mighty fortunate in having sent her to the right school."

"I hope it may prove so in the end," said Mrs.

Selden. "I have not been altogether pleased with some things Joanne has reported."

"What, for example?"

"Oh, this laundry work idea and the cooking, for one thing."

"Don't you worry over that. The day may come when you will be thankful she has those accomplishments."

"Oh, Gregory, how you talk. Those are not accomplishments."

"No, not in the same category as painting on satin and playing the Maiden's Prayer, I admit," then feeling that he had made himself disagreeable he changed the subject.

The quest for eggs was made speedily and successfully. There was but one halt on the way and that was when Joanne suddenly said: "Oh, Cousin Ned, do you mind stopping at that candy store we're coming to? I want to get an egg."

Mr. Pattison slowed down though he said: "I thought we were going to get the eggs in the country."

"Of course, but I thought it would be nice to take a chocolate egg to Pablo; he sees plenty of the other kind, but I don't believe any one will think to give him a fancy one."

"Excellent idea. Here you are. Don't be too particular in making a selection; we're in a hurry, you know."

Joanne wasted no time in making her purchase, and

came out presently with a little paper bag in her hand. "I got two," she said as she climbed into the tonneau. "One is for Unc' Aaron."

Her cousin chuckled. "I doubt if the old fellow ever saw such a thing."

"But don't you think he'll like it?"

"He'll be tickled to death."

And indeed it would be hard to say which was the more pleased, the old man or the boy. Unc' Aaron showed every one of his remaining teeth as he took the egg gingerly in his wrinkled brown hand. "Jes' erzackly matches mah complexion," he said with a grin, "an' all dese yer little white crinkly-cranklies on it sutt'nly is pretty. I keeps it on mah mankelpiece, Miss Jo."

"Oh, no, you mustn't," returned Joanne in alarm; "it will all melt. You must eat it."

Unc' Aaron scratched his old gray head and looked around helplessly at Pablo.

"It's all creamy and sugary inside," explained Joanne.

Unc' Aaron pawed at Pablo with a funny sidewise movement as he spluttered with laughter. "Laws, honey," he exclaimed, "I a-thinkin' all de time it one o' dese yer mak believes, jes' fur a pretty, an' not fur no mastification. Yas, miss, I eats it ef yuh says so." He was still doubtful of its fitness for food, but rather than disappoint the young lady he was ready to swallow it whole if she demanded it.

As for Pablo, his English was unequal to the occasion and he poured forth his thanks in appreciative Spanish winding up with the assertion that he kissed her hand and placed himself at her feet.

Then there was a brief visit to Chico when Joanne had scarce more than time to kiss his dark head and give him a lump of sugar she had brought him, before Mrs. Clover called to her to come and see her baby chicks and yellow ducklings, then Cousin Ned was ready to go and off they started with a big basket of eggs, two bottles of cream, and other country products.

The evening sun spread a soft light upon the land, picking out sparkles in the river and touching to a vivid green the young leaves on the most adventurous of the trees. In the distance old Sugarloaf loomed up faintly blue, while from a scraggy sycamore a cardinal bird showed his splendor against a background of pines. Once in a while the plaintive note of a peewee or the cheerier whistle of a robin greeted them as they sped along, and once from out a depth of dense forest sounded the liquid song of a wood-thrush.

For a long time Joanne sat in silence. Her cousin, too, seemed lost in thought. After a while, however, he asked: "What are you thinking about, Jo?"

"I'm not thinking; I'm just enjoying," she made answer. "It is all so lovely that I want it to soak in. One thing I did think about a little while ago was that I mean to study the birds. It seems to me I never shall have a better chance."

"You couldn't find a better locality," her cousin assured her. Then they lapsed into silence again and soon were threading their way through the city's streets, reaching home with not an egg broken.

CHAPTER VII

DYE AWAY

BEARING a basket of eggs between them Joanne and Winnie arrived at Miss Chesney's house the next morning. As the door opened a great chattering was heard.

"Oh," exclaimed Winnie, "some of the Boy Scouts must be here."

Joanne drew back almost loosing her hold upon the basket.

"What's the matter?" queried Winnie.

"Boys," responded Joanne. "I—I'm kind of afraid of boys. I don't know how to talk to them."

"Nonsense," returned Winnie. "You talk to them just as you do to girls. Come along and don't be silly."

So Joanne followed Winnie's bold entrance and soon found herself in the midst of a merry group of girls and boys.

"Here they are!" cried Virgie. "Did you bring the eggs? Good! How many?"

"Four dozen and a half," answered Joanne; "we thought we'd better allow for breakage."

"Yum-yum, what lovely fresh eggs!" exclaimed Virgie as she peeped into the basket. "Did they come from that place in the country?"

"Yes. Cousin Ned and I went out there yesterday afternoon and got them, so I can guarantee that they are strictly fresh. It was perfectly lovely out there, and will be even lovelier when we all go."

"I am just crazy about going," returned Virgie. "Come out into the kitchen, Jo; the boys are out there. They are dyeing eggs for the wounded soldiers at the hospital. We're letting them get through first and then they will help us do ours."

Joanne followed Virgie rather timidly. Winnie was already in the midst of the company. "Here's Jo, girls and boys," announced Virgie. "It's Jo Selden, boys, and she has brought all these lovely eggs from that spot in the country we have been telling you about."

"It must be a corking place," remarked the boy nearest Joanne. "Tell us about it, Jo. Gee whiz! but you're lucky to have a cousin like that."

"Yes, tell us, Jo," spoke up two or three others. "We want to hear all about it, for we're looking for a place to camp, and we thought maybe we Boy Scouts could find favor in your cousin's sight so he'd let us in on the ground floor, as it were."

"It surely would be ground floor," returned Joanne,

and before she knew it she was chattering away to half a dozen at once, waxing eloquent on the subject of the lodge, the river and all the rest of it.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" exclaimed Chet Lacey, "I never heard of such attractions all in one spot. It makes me fairly squirm with envy. I say, boys, we've just got to see it, if we do no more than wriggle inside the first fence. We've all got to be awfully nice to Joanne so she will tell Mr. Pattison what a fine lot we are. Miss Selden, won't you allow me to escort you to a chair? Do you feel too warm? Shall I fan you? Are you chilly? Do permit me to get you a shawl or something."

Of course Joanne had to dimple and laugh at this nonsense, but it made her feel perfectly at home with these unaffected boys, so that before long she was as merry as the rest.

"Where's Claudia?" she asked as she realized that their patrol leader was not present.

"She'll be here in a minute," Virgie told her. "She is writing a song for the occasion. Watch those blue eggs, Jo; they mustn't get too dark."

So Joanne turned her attention to the pan of eggs while the boys carefully ladled out those already done. There were four boys in the party, Chesney Lacey, Miss Chesney's nephew, better known as Chet, Milton Seymour, Peter Lowe and Hal Fosdick. A great deal of chaffing went on, but the business of dyeing the eggs was not allowed to suffer.

Presently Claudia came in waving a paper. "I did it!" she exclaimed, "with my little hatchet."

"Did you hatch it?" inquired Pete. At which the other boys fell upon him.

"Here, here," cried Miss Chesney, "no scrapping, boys."

"We couldn't stand it," answered Chet, "really, Aunt Nan, we couldn't."

"If you can hatch a plot I don't see why you couldn't hatch a song," said Pete as he smoothed down his rumpled hair.

"Don't let's argue that," remarked Miss Chesney; "let's have Claudia's song. Out with it, Claudia."

"You won't have to listen long," said Claudia, "for it is very short. It goes to a little boat song that I reckon you all know; that song 'Lightly Row,' you know. Any one who doesn't know it can soon catch on. Here goes:

"Dye away! Dye away,
This is less of work than play.
Make them bright, dark or light,
Then they'll be just right.
Eggs of red and eggs of blue,
Yellow, green and purple hue;
Dye away! Dye away!
Make the colors gay.

Sing and work! Work and sing!
Mix a song with everything.

Children dear, eggs are here
For your Easter cheer.
Eggs of red and eggs of blue
We are dyeing now for you.
Dye away! Dye away!
Make the colors gay."

"Fine, Claudia," cried her audience. "Let's go to it." And in a few minutes the room resounded with the song.

Joanne knew the old melody very well, for it was one her grandmother had sung to her when she was only a baby, so her voice rang out sweet and clear. The words, scribbled in large letters on a big sheet of paper hung on the wall, were easily read by every one. Over and over they were sung while the eggs were stirred in the dye, and it was only when the last eggs were transferred to a big bowl that the song ceased.

"We've requisitioned two automobiles," said Hal Fosdick. "Who wants to go along with us? We are going to the hospital, but can drop you girls at the Home if you say so."

Then there was a discussion as to who should go and who should not. Some of the girls had luncheon engagements, so finally the number dwindled down to six, and it was decided that these should accept the boys' invitation, and should carry the eggs to the Orphan's Home. Joanne and Winnie were among the six and found themselves in the car with Miss Chesney, Chet Lacey and Hal Fosdick. It was a matter of but

a few minutes to reach the Home and to deliver the eggs, then what Winnie called the "Dye away party" broke up and Joanne was at home again.

She was hardly indoors before her grandmother called her to say: "Your Cousin Neds wants you to call him up at his office as soon as you can."

Joanne needed no second summons but was at the 'phone in a minute and soon heard her Cousin Ned's voice. "This is Joanne, Cousin Ned," she responded to his "Hello!"

"Good!" came the response. "What do you think of leading your Girl Scouts up to the lodge next Tuesday? Don't you have holiday next week? What's the good of waiting till Saturday?"

"Of course we needn't wait, that is if the girls can go; some of them can I know. Miss Dodge is away, but Miss Chesney is here. Tell me how you happened to think of our going on Tuesday."

"I saw Dawson this morning; he drove down with Tim Clover, and said he was coming down again with the boat on Monday, expects to start back on Tuesday, and says he can take you all along if you want to go. You'd better hustle around and get your girls together so as to let me know by Monday."

"I'll do it. Are you going up with us, Cousin Ned?"

"Afraid I can't this time, but you'll be all right with Unc' Aaron and Mrs. Clover to look after you."

"Of course we shall. I'll go to see Miss Chesney

at once and then we'll get hold of the girls. I'm so excited I can hardly talk."

"Then don't. Good-bye." And Joanne found herself cut off.

It was a busy afternoon for her. First came the consultation with Miss Chesney who expressed herself as not only willing but eager to head the expedition, if, by chance, Miss Dodge had not returned.

"She has gone no farther than Baltimore," said Miss Chesney. "It will be easy to get her on the 'phone, and, unless she has made engagements she cannot break or cancel in some way, it is my opinion that she will come back."

"But you'll go anyhow, won't you?" inquired Joanne who was a little speck fonder of her lieutenant than of her captain.

"Oh, my yes; wouldn't miss it for the world."

Then for an hour they were busy in calling up different girls, and finally the matter was settled. Six girls would be ready to join the expedition. Some had made engagements they could not break; some had tickets for the Wednesday matinées; two or three were going to be out of town.

"I'd rather go to the country than to any old matinée," remarked Joanne. "There are always chances to go to matinées but a chance like this is rare."

"I agree with you perfectly, my child," said Miss Chesney. "Well, it is all settled and all there is to find out is when and where we meet. I suppose we

start from Georgetown; that's where the canal ends, or begins, whichever way you put it."

It was joyous company which met on the bank of the old canal. Each girl was equipped for such an outing, Joanne, for the first time, wearing her outfit, and very proud of it. At the last minute Miss Dodge dashed up, having cut short her visit in order to be with her troop. There were many delays, Mr. Dawson being a deliberate sort of person, who every little while forgot something he intended to get at the store near by, and must go back for it, but at last they were off.

Every girl was in a state of giggling excitement as the boat began to slip through the quiet waters. It was all such a novelty, the flat canal boat, the patient mule walking the tow-path, his ramshackle, dusky driver, the first lock where the boat rose slowly up, up when the gates were shut and finally swung out upon a higher level, the shores growing wilder and wilder till soon it seemed as if they must be miles and miles beyond civilization, the rush of the rapids at Little Falls, and then the quiet flow of the blue Potomac.

"Such a leisurely way of going, but it is never monotonous," remarked Miss Dodge when the girls had quieted down and were making few attempts at conversation.

"I could go this way forever," said Miss Chesney as she lay back lazily watching the light and shade upon the water.

"Willows whiten, aspens quiver
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Through the wave that runs forever
By the island in the river,"

she quoted dreamily.

"I've heard the 'Tirra lirra by the river,' but it wasn't Sir Lancelot," Joanne responded; "it was the canal boatman sounding his horn at night for the lock to be opened, but it was very weird and romantic for all that, and I love to hear it."

The boat continued on its slow way. At the Great Falls the girls would fain have halted, but Mr. Dawson shook his head. "Ain't no time to stop if we want to get in before nightfall. Never can tell how many boats there are ahead of us nor how long we may be held up at the locks."

The girls huddled back to their places. "Oh, dear," sighed Joanne, "I did want so much to see the Falls."

"They're well worth seeing," said Miss Dodge. "If they were in Europe or in some more enterprising locality they would be advertised far and wide and people would flock to see them. As it is half the people who come to Washington never have heard of them. Never mind, Joanne, we'll take a lunch and come up on a picnic some day, then we'll have more time. You will want more than a glimpse."

This pleasant prospect more than satisfied Joanne, and she gave herself up to the enjoyment of the moment. Lunch was eaten, songs were sung, shadows

began to lengthen. It was sometimes tedious waiting at the locks, but finally Mr. Dawson announced that they had gone through the last. They were passing towering crags by this time, and could hear the roar of rapids further on. Great holes in the jutting rocks suggested the lairs of wild creatures. From the depths of the woods and from the copses near by birds were singing. Presently a turn in the canal brought to view the little lodge snuggled down at the foot of a rock-strewn hill.

Joanne sprang to her feet. "There it is! There it is!" she cried, and every girl gazed in the direction she indicated. "We go right by to the lock," she continued, "and will have to walk back, but it isn't far."

"We shall be glad of the walk," declared Miss Dodge, "for we have been sitting still so long."

The girls were now all excitement which was redoubled when Joanne again cried out: "There's Unc' Aaron and Pablo; they have come to meet us."

Sure enough when the boat stopped there stood the pair with eager hands ready to take the girls' packs, and in spite of protests, loaded themselves down and went on to the lodge. "We can't have that, you know," said Claudia to Winnie. "We've got to do things for ourselves, or we shall lose half the joy, besides missing our chances of earning merit badges."

Joanne looked distressed. "I know, but you see Unc' Aaron is accustomed to doing things for Cousin Ned and his friends when they come up, and he won't

understand that he isn't expected to do them for us, the more so that he considers us young ladies who must be waited on."

"I see. Well, we'll put it up to Miss Dodge and let her grapple with the situation."

This they did and their captain promised that she would deal as delicately with the old darkey as she could, but that her girls must not be deprived of their experiences. They found the fires laid and Unc' Aaron prepared to make his famous griddle cakes for supper.

"Oh, dear," exclaimed Claudia, "we can't let him do that, can we, Miss Dodge?"

"He'll be so disappointed," Joanne put in. "I don't see why he can't make them this once. Somebody might watch him, some one who is cleverer than I and who could write out the recipe afterward."

Miss Dodge laughed. "For the sake of that I think we shall have to give in this time. I wonder, by the way, how he knew we were coming."

"I think Mr. Dawson must have told him, for he knew when he started yesterday that he was to bring us back with him."

"Of course; that explains it. I think I'll go into the kitchen and take a hand in things. Probably he will respect my authority more than that of any of you younger ones."

Claudia and Joanne went off to find the other girls bustling about making ready the rooms for the night.

"There's not such an awful lot to do," complained Winnie. "To be sure the place isn't so powerful clean, but the beds are made. We'll give the whole house a thorough going over and leave it spick and span for Mr. Pattison."

"It will take us nearly the whole day to do that," said Esther Rhodes looking around, "and we do want to be in the open as much as we can. I am perfectly wild to explore this heavenly place."

"Oh, no, it won't take us a whole day," declared Claudia; "besides we have more than one day."

"Not more than to-morrow," returned Esther.

"Why, yes we have, if we choose to stay. Didn't you hear Joanne say that Mr. Pattison sent word we were to stay till the end of the week if we wished? He is coming up with some friends on Saturday evening but we shall not need to start off till Saturday morning."

"Oh, joy, joy!" cried Esther. "No, I didn't hear that at all. I shall have to get word to my mother in some way, for I told her we were to be here till Thursday."

"That's easy," Joanne told her; "all you have to do is to telephone from the lock."

"All this and a telephone thrown in!" exclaimed Esther. "Don't let us waste another minute indoors, girls."

So out they trooped to see glorious lights upon the river, to hear birds singing all around them, to feel a

soft, sweet breeze blowing fresh from the water and to smell ravishing odors, which, though these were now mingled with the smoke from Unc' Aaron's griddle, were not vitiated in the opinion of the hungry girls.

"Do look at that precious little island up there," cried Winnie as she turned her eyes from nearer objects to the curving line of river beyond. "I wonder if we could get to it."

"Certainly," Joanne answered. "Cousin Ned often goes there when he is out fishing with his friends. They build a fire and cook the fish over the coals."

"Dear me," sighed Winnie, "there are so many lovely things to do one doesn't know where to begin, and we'll never get them all done."

"Of course not," returned Joanne, "not in one trip, but we mean there shall be more than one."

"I devoutly hope so. Me, oh me! Joanne, but I am glad you joined our troop."

Joanne laughed, then came the summons to supper and the girls trooped into the dining-room to be regaled upon the famous griddle cakes and honey.

It was only when it was too dark to see that they were ready to come indoors after supper, then they gathered around a crackling fire in the big stone fireplace to tell stories, sing songs and have a good time generally till an old-fashioned clock on the mantel told them it was bedtime.

It was perhaps an hour later that Joanne, turning on her pillow, waked sufficiently to hear a boatman's

horn. She touched Winnie who was sleeping peacefully by her side. "Tirra lirra by the river," whispered Joanne, but Winnie slept on and Joanne snuggled down again on her pillow.

CHAPTER VIII

"SMILE, SMILE, SMILE"

IT was incredible what a variety of activities the girls were able to get into their three days' stay. They went canoeing down the canal, they rode, they went for long hikes, they studied the birds; they gathered wild flowers, they cleaned house, they cooked, washed and ironed, and started off on Saturday morning, feeling that there was still much of which they had not availed themselves.

But they did not, as Winnie remarked, "mourn as those without hope," for before they started for the station who should appear upon the scene but Mr. Pattison, who announced that he had come up ahead of his friends in order to see if there was anything left for them to come to.

"With a lot of scatter-brained girls on hand," he said, "I didn't know but I should find the house burned down."

"You horrid mean thing!" cried Joanne, "you know you didn't expect anything of the kind. I'll leave it to anybody if you ever saw the place in such

apple-pie order. Just come and see." She led him from spot to spot till he was obliged to confess she spoke truly.

"I give in," he exclaimed. "You are fairies or brownies or anything you choose, and I take off my hat to the Girl Scouts. Of course I didn't think you would do any harm deliberately, but I didn't know but you would be more or less careless. Where's Miss Dodge?"

Joanne hunted her up and a long conference followed between the captain and Mr. Pattison. The girls, all ready to go, stood around impatiently. "I wonder what they are talking about," said Joanne.

"Miss Dodge looks mightily pleased," returned Winnie.

"Probably he is complimenting her upon being at the head of such a fine troop," remarked Claudia.

"Oh, Claudia, what a conceited remark," exclaimed Esther.

Claudia laughed. "How literal you always are, Ess," she said.

"All the same," remarked Winnie serenely, "we are a fine troop; no one can deny."

"Oh, Win," Esther began but stopped short as she saw that the conference had broken up and that the two were coming toward them.

"It is evident that Miss Dodge's smile is the kind that won't come off," whispered Winnie to Joanne; "it is getting broader and broader."

Miss Dodge was not long in giving them the reason for her pleased expression. "Girls," she began, "I want you to give three cheers for Mr. Pattison; he has offered this place to us for the month of July so we can have our summer camp here."

It is needless to say that the cheers were given with a will, then the girls crowded around with a dozen questions and with vociferous thanks. Finally they started off on their eight mile hike to the station singing "We feel just as happy as big Sunflowers," a song which Miss Dodge had resurrected from an old book, and which they had taken over as particularly fitting for a Sunflower troop.

Joanne reached home tired but very happy. She flung down her pack and bounced into the room where her grandparents were sitting. "We've had just the gloriousest time," she exclaimed, "and just think of it, I have walked eight miles this morning."

"Oh, Joanne," cried her grandmother, "you must be quite exhausted. You'd better go right up-stairs and go to bed. I will send your lunch up."

Joanne made a funny little grimace at her grandfather. "But, Gradda, I don't want to go to bed, and I am as hungry as a hunter. I have grown such an appetite you wouldn't recognize it. I shouldn't like to tell you how many cakes I ate for supper last night. Miss Dodge has learned to make just as good griddle cakes as Unc' Aaron's, and we all have tried, too. Mine aren't quite so good yet, but they weren't so bad."

She turned to her grandfather. "Please, Grad, say I don't have to go up and even lie down. I feel fine as silk."

He took her by the shoulders and looked her over critically. "I must say I never saw you looking so well," he declared. "I don't think she need go to her room, my dear," he said to his wife.

"But I am sure she will have a headache if she eats when she is exhausted," returned Mrs. Selden.

"But I don't feel exhausted or even tired," persisted Joanne. "We came home on the cars and that rested me. Why, Gradda, I have been going like a steam engine ever since I left."

"How many headaches have you had?"

"Not one. Isn't this fine? We are going to spend July up at that heavenly place, all our troop."

"Oh, Joanne, but we shall be at Jamestown by July," her grandmother spoke. "I heard from Mrs. Abercrombie only this morning. The Admiral will spend the summer there, and they are counting on our coming."

"Oh, but Gradda, I don't want to go to any of those stupid watering places and I don't see why I have to."

"My dear, of course you have to. Do you suppose I would think of leaving you behind? The idea is preposterous. I shouldn't spend a peaceful moment."

"But why, Gradda, why?" The old fretful whine came into Joanne's voice.

"For excellent reasons. A delicate child like you exposed to, I don't know what dangers, far from your home, your family, your doctor. No, no, put that notion out of your head at once and think no more about it."

Joanne stood still for a moment with clenched hands and frowning brows, then she burst out with, "I think it's horrid mean to deprive me of my only pleasures. I'll run away; I'll hide, but I won't go up to that stupid place, I won't, I won't."

"Joanne!" her grandfather's voice came sternly.

"If this is what you learn from your Girl Scouts, to be impertinent and rebellious," said her grandmother stiffly, "I think you'd better resign from the troop."

Joanne burst into tears and rushed up to her room, angry, ashamed, distressed. Where were her high hopes, her promises? She threw herself across her bed in a fit of passionate weeping. It was too hard, too hard; it was more than she could bear to have her beautiful dreams shattered. To think that the girls would be there at the lodge without her, at the place they would never have heard of but for her! They would be riding Chico—no, they should not. He was her pony; she would give orders that no one should use him but Pablo. They would be rowing up to that dear little island in *her* cousin's boat; they would be partaking of *her* cousin's hospitality. They would be laughing and playing while she was miserable. She

wished she might go into a decline, and then her grandparents would see what it meant to be cruel to her. She already felt a headache coming on. She hoped they would realize that it was they who made her suffer. Even her grandfather, on whose support she always counted, even he had not taken her part. She fell to sobbing again spasmodically.

Suddenly she sat up. She heard the maid coming along the hall, then a tap at the door. "Well, what is it?" asked Joanne.

"Mrs. Selden wants to know if you aren't coming to lunch, Miss Joanne," came the answer.

"Tell her I don't want any. I have a splitting headache."

The maid went away. Joanne sat on the side of the bed, her feet dangling over, her eyes red, her hair disordered, altogether a forlorn little figure. They didn't love her. They didn't understand her. There was nobody to sympathize with her. To whom could she go for comfort? She thought of Winnie, but decided that Winnie was too candid and outspoken to deal with the situation. She wanted sympathy, not advice. There was Miss Dodge, or Claudia, but a little feeling of embarrassment came over her as she considered any of these. She was not sure that she could present her case so as to win entire commiseration. "I'll go to Cousin Sue," she said after a few minutes' thought. "She will understand, for she knows Gradda so well and she is fond of me. They'll

be at lunch and they won't miss me. I don't care if they do; let them."

She bathed her face, straightened her dress, brushed her hair and then stole softly down the back stairs and out a side door. The fresh air felt grateful; the little park through which she walked was green, and lively with laughing children. By the time she reached Mrs. Pattison's apartment the world did not appear such a dreary place.

"Come right out and have lunch with me," said Mrs. Pattison when Joanne appeared. "I'm all alone, for Ned has gone up to the country, as perhaps you know, and I'm delighted to have company. They're having a stag party up at the lodge, you know, and so, of course I am out of it, though just as well pleased. Did you have a good time? Come in and tell me all about it."

Joanne entered the pleasant dining-room and took a place at the table. "We had a perfectly gorgeous time," she said, "and the girls are so enthusiastic about the place, as well they may be."

Mrs. Pattison looked at her rather critically. "Now I come to see you at close range it appears to me that you look rather done up by your trip."

Joanne colored up and bit her lip. "It wasn't the trip that did me up, but what has occurred since."

"My dear! I hope there is nothing serious with aunt or uncle. Didn't you find them well?"

"Oh, yes, it's all to do with me."

"You? Why, I thought things were going beautifully with you. I am sure we have all been remarking on how well you look."

Joanne drew a long sigh and looked down into her plate. "I shall not be looking well if I have to be bored to death all summer."

"That doesn't sound cheerful. What's the idea? as Ned would say."

"Gradda wants to drag me off with her to one of those horrid, stupid watering places she likes to go to, where they do nothing but dress up and do fancy work. I loathe them, more than ever now since I know what really good times are. I never knew why I was so discontented at one of those fashionable resorts, but now I know."

Mrs. Pattison smiled. "What special one rouses your ire on this occasion?"

"Oh, that Jamestown near Newport."

"Why, that's rather a nice place."

"For some," returned Joanne plaintively. "Did you know, Cousin Sue," she went on impressively, "that Cousin Ned has offered the lodge to our troop for the month of July, and that the girls are simply wild about it?"

"Has he? The dear fellow, it's just like him. You see we are going down to Virginia, to my sister's, for July, and shall not be using the lodge."

"But don't you see," Joanne laid down her fork, "don't you see, Cousin Sue, that if Gradda insists upon

dragging me off with her I shall miss all those heavenly times."

"Of course. I hadn't thought of that."

"And—and," continued Joanne with a little gasp, "the reason I look done up is because I cried myself nearly sick about it. I told Gradda what I thought and then I went up-stairs and cried and cried till I hadn't a tear left, then I slipped off and came here. I was so perfectly wretched and I wanted some one to comfort me. Please sympathize with me."

"I do sympathize with you, certainly I do, but Joanne, dear, doesn't your grandmother know where you are?"

"I don't know and I don't care. Probably she thinks I am still in my room. She isn't concerning herself about my misery; she is thinking only of depriving me of my pleasures."

"Dear, dear, that's a harsh way to talk. Of course she hasn't any such motive. It is because of her deep concern in you that she wants you always with her. There are always two sides to a question, my dear, and I think half the trouble in the world comes from our not putting ourselves in the other fellow's place."

"Then please put yourself in my place."

Mrs. Pattison smiled. "All right. I am Joanne Selden, a fatherless, motherless girl, cared for and watched over by her grandmother ever since she was a baby, who cared for and nursed her delicate young mother, and who is now so fearfully afraid that some-

thing will happen to the beloved child of her adored son that she cannot endure the thought of being parted from her."

Joanne's head drooped and her lips trembled, but she said nothing.

"I am Joanne Selden, who is not always a source of unadulterated joy, being a rather spoiled little somebody, but who wants to be the best ever and who truly loves her grandparents, and is pouty and saucy only when she can't have her own way."

"Oh, Cousin Sue," Joanne began tremblingly, then she left her place and went around to her cousin, dropping on her knees and burying her face on her cousin's shoulder. "I didn't think you would be cruel, too," she sobbed.

"Was I cruel? Perhaps I was, but I wanted you to see the other side of the question and how else was I to do it? We all love you very dearly, darling child, so please don't think we are down on you. Don't take this too seriously, for maybe there will be a way out. What is that about always being cheerful and going about with a smile? It seems to me that I saw something of the sort in your Girl Scout handbook, didn't I?"

Joanne lifted her wet eyes. "Yes, Cousin Sue, I know, but there are times when one can't be cheerful, when the tragedies of life crush one utterly."

Mrs. Pattison repressed a smile. "You poor little dear, I suppose it does look like a tragedy to you, but

it strikes me this is a time to turn your clouds inside out. Chirk up, dear. It isn't July, and won't be for over two months. No one can tell what will happen by then. Come now, finish your lunch and let's talk of something cheerful. I'll call up your grandmother and tell her you will be with me this afternoon, so she won't be uneasy."

Joanne rose to her feet and went back to her scarcely tasted luncheon. "Just one thing, Cousin Sue," she said, "before we leave this subject. Won't you use your influence with Gradda and try to make her see that it will be for my good to spend that month with my troop? I'm afraid she thinks I don't profit by being a Girl Scout."

"Why?"

"Because I did fly out and say raging things to her."

"Then you might, for your soul's good, offer her an apology."

"Oh, Cousin Sue, I couldn't. I never did such a thing in my life."

"High time you began. Don't you see, you blind little mole, that if you do now, she will think it is the yeast of scouting working in you? Don't you owe it to yourself as a Girl Scout to do something that will show you are making progress in character?"

"You talk as if you were a captain of a troop yourself."

"I'm not, but I have friends who are and I know that good times are not all you girls must look for.

The big thing is the training of yourselves into such women as the country can be proud of. There's an old Sunday school text which was the motto of our class when I was a little girl of your age: 'Be not weary of well doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not.' I remember that our teacher told us the essence of the thing lay in that 'if ye faint not'; in other words: Don't fall down on your job. If you are going to be a Girl Scout, be a first-rate one."

Joanne finished her meal in silence. She was thinking too hard to talk. It came over her that she had not realized what a serious person this pretty young wife of her Cousin Ned could be. She had always appeared full of fun, rather fond of pretty things, of social affairs, and here suddenly she was preaching. Then all at once she understood why Cousin Sue was popular. Underneath the laughter and gay spirits lay sterling character, and she realized that to be a Girl Scout one mustn't think only of fun and badges, but of the intangible things that lasted forever.

As they left the room, Cousin Sue cuddled up to her little guest. "I was awfully preachy, wasn't I? But it was just because I love you so hard. Let's go to a movie; that will cheer us up."

The play they saw happened to be just the one to raise Joanne's spirits, and she went home a much more cheerful person than the one who left it. All the way up to her room she was trying to make up her mind to offer that apology. It was the hardest task ever

set her. She did not see how in the world she could do it, but she must. "I've just got to do it, somehow," she told herself. Then all of a sudden the happy thought came to her that she could write it. Her grandmother was out. She would write her a little note and leave it on the dressing table in her grandmother's room. No sooner planned than done. The note ran:

"DEAREST GRADDA:

"I was a babyish pig to speak to you as I did. Please forgive me.

"Your very loving
"JOANNE."

Having done this she felt a great load lifted, and went about getting ready for dinner, singing softly to herself: "Smile, smile, smile."

After a while the front door shut. Her grandparents came up-stairs. Joanne heard the murmur of their voices, then in the hall her grandmother's footsteps. She turned toward her door. Her grandmother came in swiftly holding out her arms. "Dear child, dear child," she murmured as Joanne went to her.

Her grandfather smiled down at her as they all went down-stairs together. "Well, Pickings," he said, "are the skies clear?"

Joanne smiled back at him. "It has cleared off beautifully," she answered.

Not a word was said about Jamestown either at table or during the evening. Joanne told of the amusing play she had seen. She played cribbage with her grandmother, and in answer to one or two anxious looks she smiled. "No, Gradda, not a sign of headache," she said.

When she went to kiss her grandfather good-night he drew her close and whispered: "Congratulations on the victory." And Joanne understood. She went to her room smiling.

CHAPTER IX

BABY OR SOLDIER—WHICH?

NOT a word did Joanne say to her girl friends about her summer plans. Cousin Sue's advice had not fallen upon stony ground. Why should one dwell upon an unpleasant subject when there was no immediate need to? Why cross a bridge till you came to it? Meantime there were many things to occupy a schoolgirl's thoughts, with examinations coming on, and quite as many things to interest a Girl Scout outside the matter of winning badges. Sunflower Troop took weekly hikes, sometimes no farther than to Potomac Park to see the Japanese cheery trees in blossom, sometimes as far as Arlington. There was a Saturday picnic to the Great Falls, another to Alexandria and Mt. Vernon. An afternoon at the Zoo gave an opportunity to those girls who were studying birds and animals. An afternoon in the Maryland woods permitted more than one to complete her list of wild flowers. So the weeks went by till June when Joanne was whirled away to Annapolis where her grandparents must go to join in the excitement of June week at the Naval Academy.

One might give chapters to the doings of that gay

occasion, but while Joanne did participate in some of them her grandmother declared that she was still too young to go to the dances except as a looker on, therefore that sober pleasure was all that was hers.

However, she had plenty to report to an interested audience, when she returned, but that done she felt that she was nearing that dreaded time when she must disclose the fact that she would not be able to join her troop at the camp in July.

It was but a few days before the closing of school that she was walking home with Winnie and Claudia, and the subject came up.

"Just think," said Winnie, "July will be here before we know it, and then, ho for the woods and dales of Maryland! Aren't you excited about it, Jo? Now that those old exams. are over and you have come off with flying colors you can just rest your mind and dream of the lodge and the river."

Joanne looked very grave. "Perhaps I should have told you before," she answered, "but I simply couldn't, for I have been hoping I wouldn't have to. Girls, I'm not going."

"Not going?" The other two girls stood still and looked at each other, then Claudia gave Joanne a little shake. "Of course you're going. You needn't think we're going to be taken in by such an obvious joke."

"Really and truly," avowed Joanne. "Gradda is going to Jamestown, Rhode Island, and refuses to leave me behind."

"Are you still jollying us, or is that a fact?" queried Winnie.

"I wish it were a joke, but it is only too solemn a fact," responded Joanne with so grave a face that the others no longer doubted.

"Oh, well, then that will break up the party," asserted Winnie. "I, for one, wouldn't think of going if you are to be left out. It would be too mean for words when you were the means of getting us the invitation. Don't you think so, Clausie?"

"I certainly do, unless Joanne really likes going with her grandmother."

"If you had seen me when she announced her intention," said Joanne, with a little whimsical smile, "you wouldn't have thought I was carried away with enthusiasm."

"Oh, Jo, what did you do?" inquired Winnie with a little laugh.

"I shrieked protests; I stamped; I defied; I sassed; I flounced out of the room and went up-stairs and howled."

"Well, for once I think you were excusable, for all, perhaps, except for the sassing. What did your grandmother do?"

"She hadn't a chance to do anything much, for after I had got my bearings I rushed madly to Cousin Sue Pattison and she straightened me out so that I wrote a note of apology and my bark sailed on serenely."

"Good girl!" Claudia patted her on the back approvingly. "I'll bet it took courage to eat that piece of humble pie."

"I'll say it did," returned Joanne with a little laugh at her bit of slang, "but it was soon over and I don't mean to let myself go so rambunctiously again; it doesn't pay, I find. You girls should know Cousin Sue; she is the dearest thing. I don't know what I should do without her. We have been such friends ever since that horrid time."

"If she is anything like Mr. Pattison she must be a peach," declared Winnie.

"She is just as much of a peach but a different variety," replied Joanne. "Well, girls, I want to say this, that you are not to consider me at all in the going to the lodge. You are to go and have the very best sort of time. It will make me very unhappy if you back out. I want you to use Chico all that is good for him and I want you to be nice to Pablo. As long as confessions are in the air, I may as well tell you that at first I was so mad that I vowed no one should ride Chico if I couldn't, and I was ready to fight any one who dared to suggest riding him."

"But now you have come down from your high horse," said Winnie.

"Not my high horse; my little pony," retorted Joanne brightly.

"Well, if you can joke about it, I should say you had recovered entirely from your mad," said Claudia.

"Listen, girls, I don't think we'd better say anything about Jo's not going, at least not yet. It will stir up such a rumpus, and the girls will jabber over the pros and cons till they are blue in the face. We won't spring it on them till the very last. I must say, Jo, that I think you're tremendously generous. If it were my cousin's place and my pony, I'd rebel, I'm sure."

Joanne looked at her with a queer little smile. "No, you wouldn't," she said, "at least, not for long, because you are a Girl Scout."

Claudia gave her a hug, then and there, in spite of the fact that they were by no means without observers. "You dear, sweet little thing," she cried; "you'll sail in ahead of all of us, if we don't look out."

Then the three parted, and Joanne walked on thoughtfully, beneath the arching, leafy trees. There were roses, roses everywhere; the air was sweet with them and with the pendant blooms of wistaria. Joanne felt very happy even when she thought of the coming of July, which would separate her from her companions. "I have nearly a whole month yet," she said to herself as she mounted the steps leading to her home.

She found her grandmother and Cousin Sue in close conversation. "Cousin Sue!" she exclaimed, "I certainly am glad to find you here. You are going to stay to lunch, of course."

"Of course," Mrs. Selden assured her.

"How goes school?" asked Mrs. Pattison.

"Fine as silk. I'm through all my exams. and I passed every one. I even got a pretty good mark in math., which was the fiercest one of all for a poor body like me. As for my writing and spelling, I'm afraid I had a call down on them. Even Grad can't say I haven't improved in other things; I have worked hard enough."

"You don't feel the worse for it?" said her grandmother anxiously.

"Dear me, no, I am as fit as a fiddle. You should see the stunts I can do in the gym. Gradda, do you think there will be any chance for me to row and swim, this summer? I can swim a little but I want to be a Jim dandy at it. There should be lots of chances at a place like Jamestown."

Mrs. Selden glanced at Mrs. Pattison and smiled. "What would you say if I told you we were not going to Jamestown?"

"Oh, Gradda!" Joanne clasped her hands ecstatically.

"No, we are not going for several reasons. In the first place I have had a letter from Mrs. Abercrombie who says the Admiral has to go to the Pacific coast and she is going with him, so I don't care to undertake the upkeep of the cottage we had planned to share. Then, your grandfather is interested in some matters here which will keep him occupied until August at the earliest. Sue and I were talking over the situation when you came in."

Joanne gave her cousin an appealing look.

"I've been trying to persuade your grandmother to come to Virginia with me," said Mrs. Pattison, giving Joanne an understanding look. "My sister has a great big house, and would be perfectly delighted if I were to bring Aunt Alice with me, for she adores to have company. Of course it will not be as cool as at the seashore, but it is in the mountains and ever and ever so many persons go no farther in summer. Besides, it is within easy distance of the city, so Uncle Greg could run into town whenever he found it necessary. I think it would be an ideal arrangement. It is really lovely at Kate's and the nights are cool."

"And ——" Joanne paused to give her cousin another appealing look.

"You wouldn't have to bother about the housekeeping," Mrs. Pattison went on, turning to Mrs. Selden. "Kate has an old mammy sort of cook who has been with her for years and years, and I will guarantee you will have good things to eat."

"Oh, my dear," murmured Mrs. Selden protestingly, "as if I would take that into consideration."

"I would, then," said Mrs. Pattison with a laugh; "it would make a tremendous difference to me. Come, Aunt Alice, be a sport, and say you will go, then you can bundle Jo off to Ned's place and be as free as air."

Joanne gave a little start and waited breathlessly for her grandmother's answer.

"If I could be sure it would be the best thing for her," returned Mrs. Selden meditatively.

"Of course it will be. You couldn't have her at a better place, with Miss Dodge and Miss Chesney to look after her, not to mention that nice Mrs. Clover, and old Unc' Aaron, who is a host in himself. Why, she couldn't be any better off in a sanitarium." Mrs. Pattison glanced at Joanne with mischief in her eyes as she ended her remark.

"Well," said Mrs. Selden with a sigh, "it all sounds very attractive, and you are very good to want to help me out. I declare when I had Mrs. Abercrombie's letter this morning I was completely upset. Of course I shall have to talk it over with Gregory, but I haven't a doubt but he will consider it a very happy idea, all things taken into consideration."

"Come, Jo, don't you want to take me up-stairs to wash my hands?" said Mrs. Pattison, feeling it wise to leave the subject at this point.

Joanne was only too glad to get her cousin off to herself, and when they had reached the next floor she fell upon her with a mighty hug. "Oh, you precious darling," she cried, "I could squeeze you to pieces."

"Please don't," returned Mrs. Pattison, "for I really want to take some of me to Kate's. Wasn't it fun, Jo?"

Joanne giggled. "It was simply great. I could scarcely keep my face straight when you said that about the sanitarium."

"I believe that really did the business. You'll have to get Miss Dodge here and have her talk a great deal about First Aid and Health rules and all that."

"I'll do that very thing. Gradda doesn't take us seriously at all. You'd think the Girl Scouts nothing but some sort of club where the girls did nothing but amuse themselves."

"She'll realize the practical part in time. She doesn't absorb a new idea very quickly; she isn't built that way," said Mrs. Pattison as she lathered her hands. "What team work is your troop doing just now?"

"We're trying to raise the money to buy canteens for a troop of girls that are too poor to raise it for themselves; working girls, they are, most of them."

"A good cause. I'll give a quarter toward that. Just wait till I dry my hands."

"How lovely of you! But there's no hurry."

"No time like the present; I might forget it." She presently produced the quarter and the two went down-stairs together.

Joanne was not doomed to wait long before she learned her grandparent's decision. Nothing was said at the dinner table about the summer plans, and Joanne was discreet enough not to bring up the subject, knowing that her grandmother was not one to be hurried, and that any show of impatience on her own part would only defer the matter. Immediately after dinner Dr. Selden went out and had not returned when

Joanne went up to her room, supposedly to go to bed. She had fidgeted about all evening, finding it hard to settle down to any one thing.

"I declare, Joanne, you make me nervous," said her grandmother. "What a restless child you are. Can't you sit down quietly at something? Do find something to do or else go up-stairs to bed; it is high time you went anyway."

"I thought I might wait till Grad came in," replied Joanne.

"There's no telling when that will be. He was going to meet some old friends at the club and they may talk till midnight. I advise you to go right to bed this minute and see if you can't sleep off some of that restlessness."

Joanne felt that argument would not help her cause, so up-stairs she went, and not very long after heard her grandfather come in. "Oh dear," she sighed, "why didn't I wait a wee bit longer? However, I don't suppose it would have done any good, for I doubt if Gradda would talk about me or make any plans for me before my face. I wish I knew what they are talking about." She sat on the side of her bed swinging her bare feet and listening to the murmur of voices in the room below. After standing it as long as she could she slipped her toes into her bedroom slippers and went to the head of the stairs, straining her ears to hear what was being said. Her grandmother seemed to be holding the floor; she could hear her soft

voice going on and on, but could not hear what she was talking about.

Presently the soft voice ceased and Joanne heard Dr. Selden's deeper one answering: "It seems to me an excellent idea, Alice," she could hear this clearly. "I don't see why you hesitate a moment."

More soft murmuring, then: "But, my dear, it is high time the child was taught self-reliance. Suppose anything were to happen to us, it would be a pitiful situation for her. She has been carried around on a silver tray, as it were, all her life. If she were to be suddenly thrust out into the world alone it would be very hard for her. It isn't fair to deprive her of her proper development."

Again the soft murmuring; this time a little louder.

"All very true," the deep voice came in again, "but we are living in a different age, and you cannot expect things to go on in the way they did when you were young. Conditions have altered; standards are not the same. As long as she is healthy and happy why not let her do as the other girls do?"

This time Joanne heard: "But, Gregory, I don't see how I can allow her to be separated from me an entire month."

"Nonsense!" again Dr. Selden spoke. "You may as well get used to it. Suppose she marries some day and goes to the uttermost parts of the earth."

Joanne started back, suddenly realizing that she was eavesdropping. What right had she to listen to a con-

versation not intended for her ears? The color flamed up into her face, and she clapped her hands over her offending members. "How mean of me! How mean!" she whispered as she ran back to her room. "I wouldn't have believed I could be so contemptible. Poor, dear Gradda; how anxious she is about me. I am an ungrateful wretch."

She scrambled into bed, and, warm June night though it was, drew the sheet over her head as if to shut out the conversation taking place below. She could not shut out, however, the memory of what she had heard. Suppose anything were to happen to those two; the thought had never occurred to her before; she had taken them as a matter of course. Terror seized her. She jumped up, hurried into her slippers and wrapper and flew down-stairs.

Her grandmother looked up to see her standing in the doorway pale with emotion. "Why, Joanne, my child, what is the matter?" she asked. "Are you ill?"

"No," quavered Joanne, not having control of herself to say more.

"Then what has frightened you?"

"I love you both so much and I don't want any—anything to happen to—to happen to you." She rushed to her grandmother and flung her arms around the puzzled lady's neck, then she burst into a torrent of tears.

"There, there," said Mrs. Selden soothingly. "Of

course we know you love us. She must have had a bad dream," she said to her husband.

He nodded assent. "We're all right, Joanne," he said soothingly. "The bears won't get us this time," he added as if to a small child.

Joanne lifted her head and turned in her position on her grandmother's lap. "It—it wasn't a dream," she said, with a catch in her voice. "I am a mean, sneaking varmint, for I went to the head of the stairs and leaned over the baluster to listen, and I heard what you said about suppose something were to happen to you what would I do, then it came over me what a deceiving, eavesdropping sinner I was, and I just couldn't stand it, I had to come down and tell you that I love you harder than I ever did in my life."

"You poor, dear, excitable little child," said her grandmother, patting her shoulder. "I don't know what is to become of you if you keep on like this."

"But I don't intend to keep on like this," returned Joanne straightening up and wiping her eyes. "I don't mean to keep on thinking so much of myself and what I like. Every now and then I come to a place where something opens, like a path, and I see farther. I suppose that is the way one grows up. You go on for a while as complacent as a pussy cat that has just had a saucer of cream, then suddenly something comes over you and you see yourself in quite a different light. It isn't pleasant," she shook her head mournfully.

"No, the truth isn't always pleasant," her grand-

father agreed, "but I wouldn't take myself too seriously. Suppose a soldier were suddenly to come face to face with an enemy whom he didn't at first recognize as an enemy, but suppose in the fight that followed the soldier came off victor, would he throw himself on the ground and weep because he failed to recognize the enemy at the offset?"

Joanne smiled. "He would be an idiot if he did that."

"Then don't do that. Go to the fight with a smile and a cheer. Down the enemy but do it like a man. You'll have battles to the end of your days, but don't let any one see you go all to pieces when you are entering the fight."

Joanne looked up with a sort of awed expression. "Goodness!" she exclaimed, "you make me feel more of an idiot than ever, Grad."

"I don't think you are an idiot, by any means, but I do think you are still rather babyish."

Joanne sat thoughtfully lapping the fingers of her grandmother's hand one over the other. Presently she looked up brightly. "All right, Grad," she said. "An eavesdropping, weepy baby is almost worse than a woebegone soldier; I don't intend to be either."

"Then trot off to bed and don't let's have any more of these heroics."

Joanne obeyed, but as she was mounting the stairs she heard her grandmother say: "Don't you think you were a little hard on her, Gregory?"

Her grandfather's reply was: "Not a bit of it; what the child needs is stimulant, not sentimental sympathy."

That was the end of that bout, but Joanne never forgot it, and buckled on her armor more firmly than ever in order to meet the next fray in a more soldierly spirit.

CHAPTER X

UP THE RIVER

THE first of July saw Sunflower Troop packed up and ready for the month up the river. This time they did not go by way of the canal, and it was too warm to think of a long hike, so fourteen girls were piled into two motor cars, a third taking Miss Dodge and Miss Chesney with some of the supplies. It was a very merry company, the only regret being that two of the troop were not able to come, as they had gone the month before to Maine. Although Unc' Aaron was on hand he had been given to understand that the girls must be left to their own devices, though it must be said that he obeyed these instructions with great reluctance.

The sun was still high when they arrived, for the automobiles must return to the city. There were little flickering shadows upon the grassy plot in front of the lodge, and sparkling gleams upon the river. The season of bird song was over, but the wind whispering in the trees, the murmur of the river as it tumbled over stony shallows, the hum of bees in the clover broke the absolute quiet.

For a while there was much scurrying around. Eight of the party had been told off to occupy the bungalow; for the rest a couple of tents were set up. Joanne begged to be one of the tent-holders. "I've always longed to sleep in a tent," she averred, "do, please let me." So she, with Claudia, Winnie and Esther Rhodes, was permitted to set up her belongings in one of the tents, ranging the photographs of her parents, her grandparents, Mrs. Marriott and Chico side by side as decorations, and stowing away the articles in her kit as best she could.

Then the routine of the camp began. Miss Dodge issued her orders. No one was to go out of bounds without permission. The farm was big enough and the woods extensive enough to allow of all the room for rambling that might be required. The bugle calls would tell them when to get up, when meals were ready, and so on. Each morning the girls for the various duties of the day were appointed. No one was to speak after lights were out at night. At first Joanne found these rules rather difficult to obey, but she soon fell into line with the rest of the girls, and at last had no desire to chatter after taps had sounded, for, tired out by the day's activities, she was ready to drop off as soon as her head touched the pillow, and could scarcely have distinguished the notes of the bugle from the hooting of an owl or the murmur of the river.

Every morning Pablo appeared with Chico saddled and bridled so that whoso would could take a ride.

Every morning, too, appeared Unc' Aaron to ask if "de ladies had any requirements." They seldom had, but once in a while they humored him by pretending to want his services.

"Dey sutt'nly is de mos' ondependent an' onres'less young ladies uvver I see," he confided to Joanne. "Don't 'pear to me lak dey still a minute, dey at it mo'nin' *an'* night. Dey runs aroun' lak little mices, fus' hyar den dere. Is dey do dat way in de city, Miss Jo? Is dey cook an' wash an' i'on? Don't none o' dey mas keep nobody to do de wuk?"

The old man was so distinctly puzzled that Joanne had to laugh. "They don't have to do it unless they want to," she told him, "but they like to know how."

The climax was reached so far as Unc' Aaron's opinion was concerned when the girls bore off the lock-keeper's baby and kept it most of a day while its mother did her wash. "Das a huckleberry 'bove my 'simmon," he said, shaking his head. "I gives up. Dey is sholy nice, kind young ladies, but, honey, uh uh, dey pintedly does quare things."

The girls, however, considered the baby a great find. "He is an awfully nice little thing," said Betty Streeter, who was his discoverer, "and he is so ragged and dirty that it gives us a lovely chance to bathe him and patch him up. I told his mother, who bears the sweet name of Violet Scraggs, that we could keep him all day, if she didn't mind, and we can take turns in looking after him."

"He doesn't look scraggy," remarked Winnie, which speech brought forth a groan from the rest. "What do they give him to eat?"

"I asked Mrs. Scraggs and she said: 'He eats pretty much what we do.'"

"Mercy me!" exclaimed Claudia. "How awful! I suppose they feed him on bacon and cabbage or any old thing. It is a wonder he lives."

"He was eating a nice large chunk of cake," Betty told her, "but I managed to get it away from him without his realizing it. It was pretty rich-looking cake, too."

"How old is he?" inquired Joanne.

"A year and a half."

"He might be a right pretty child if he were clean and had on decent clothes," continued Joanne. "I wonder why his mother doesn't keep him looking better."

"Oh, my dear, she has a raft of children, and a whole lot of the canal people to cook for; she doesn't get the time."

"What is the name of our young hero?" inquired Winnie.

Betty giggled. "He rejoices in the cognomen of Claude Lafayette. He is so sleepy, poor little tot, that he must have a nap, then when he wakes up we will give him a bath. If I thought his clothes would dry I would wash them out while he is asleep."

"There is no knowing how long he may sleep; it

may be for only a few minutes," said Esther, who had more knowledge of babies than the rest.

"In this hot sun they should dry in a few minutes," put in Winnie.

"I think I'll risk it," said Betty. "Where had I better lay him down?"

"Oh, please, not on my bed," came a chorus; "he is so dirty."

Betty stood still looking helplessly from the sleeping child to the group of girls. "I can't stand and hold him all day," she said plaintively; "he will have to go somewhere."

"I know," cried Joanne. "Just wait a minute, Betty." She rushed off to a cupboard where a pile of quilts had been thrown; these she folded and heaped them upon a table which she had overturned so that the legs stood in the air. "There," she exclaimed, "that makes a fine four-poster for him, and he can't possibly fall out."

"I call that a pure stroke of genius," declared Winnie. "Who but you would have thought of it, Jo?"

Claude Lafayette was laid upon his improvised bed while Betty went off to wash out his clothes, leaving two girls as watchers.

"I don't see," said Joanne as she and Winnie followed Betty, "why we can't make him some clothes; it will give us a good chance to do what is necessary for a needlework badge."

"But where can we get materials?"

"There is a little store, or rather quite a good-sized country store in the village. They sell all sorts of things. We'll ask Miss Dodge to let us go there; she'll give us permission when she knows why we want to go."

"Brilliant idea. Let's go and ask her now before any one else gets ahead of us, not that any number of garments wouldn't be acceptable, but Miss Dodge doesn't like too many of us to go out of bounds at once. We'll ask Clausie to go, too. She'll like the walk, and she is off duty in the kitchen this afternoon."

They did not delay in making their request, then, after receiving consent, they went to relieve the watchers of the baby's slumbers.

Joanne had not wasted her opportunities of improving her Spanish, and every day had a half hour's conversation with Pablo, who, if he did not speak pure Castilian, had at least a full vocabulary, and knew the idioms so that Joanne was becoming quite voluble in the language while Pablo made great progress in his English. He was a quiet, grave little fellow, so serious, in fact, that Joanne wondered if he were happy, and if he did not long to return to his own people. She asked him one day.

"Are you happy, Pablo? Do you ever get homesick?"

He looked a little puzzled over the last word, then his face cleared. "I have the *mal del pais?* Si, señorita, some days I have thees, but it is not good that I

return, better is that I remain where comes to me a future. No? It give me a very sad no to hear my language, but I shall accustom, yes, I shall accustom. When no longer I can endure no to hear the Spanish, then I speak to Chico, my little brother Chico, and I think he understand."

"I think you are very brave," said Joanne sympathetically, "and I wish you had neighbors to whom you could speak your own language. If Unc' Aaron were not so old you could teach him, and then you two could talk together."

Pablo's grave face broke into a smile at this idea. "Thees Onc' Aaron he have learn a few words, but he speak them very fonny. I wish if you hear him."

Joanne laughed. She could imagine the bungle Unc' Aaron would make of a foreign language. "I'd like to hear him," she said, "but while I am here, Pablo, you have some one to talk to."

"This is true, but it when you go that I have the homesick."

Joanne corrected this speech and then, since the half hour was up, went off to join her comrades. She thought a good deal about the situation, however, and wished that she might transplant some Spanish family to the neighborhood, but this would be an undertaking beyond her powers, therefore Pablo would have to get used to being lonely. Having decided this she thought no more about it, having, indeed, plenty of other things to think about.

Just now it was Claude Lafayette and his wardrobe which interested her, and she set off with Winnie and Claudia to the country store where they meant to lay in a supply of materials. It was a walk of about three miles, along a country road, a short cut through a piece of woods, then the highway to the village.

"We might have had Chico," said Joanne when they were turning off into the woods. "We could have taken turns in riding him."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Winnie. "Who wants to ride? It is a great deal better for us to walk. It will be only six miles all told, three miles there and three miles back; that is nothing, and we don't have to go at a rush. It is warm here in the woods, to be sure, but that doesn't matter. We'll get the breeze from the river when we are out on the road again, though it won't be so shady there."

They loitered along through the sweet smelling woods, stopping once in a while to take note of a bed of moss or a new species of fern. It was so still that only the distant sound of rushing waters or the rustle of leaves in the tree-tops reached their ears, though once in a while the voices of men working in the fields came uncertainly.

It was when they had almost reached the point where trees ended and road began that Joanne stopped short. "Hark!" she said.

The other girls came to a halt. "What is it?" Winnie was the first to ask.

"I thought I heard something like some one crying," replied Joanne.

"Probably some child at one of the houses farther on," Claudia decided.

"It sounded quite near," protested Joanne. "There it is again."

The three stood still to listen.

"There! I hear it," Claudia exclaimed, "over in that direction. Let's go see what it is."

"I hope it isn't a wildcat," said Winnie.

"More likely to be a tame cat," returned Claudia scoffingly, "though I must say it doesn't sound to me like any kind. There may be a negro cabin over that way; very likely there is, but we may as well go and investigate."

They turned off from the path and worked their way through the underbrush toward the direction from which the sounds came. In a few minutes they came upon a couple of cows which had evidently strayed from their pasture and were cropping the bushes near by. They lifted their heads and stared at the girls, then moved a little farther on.

"It couldn't have been the cows," remarked Winnie with a little laugh. "There! I see something moving. Maybe it is a calf."

"A calf wouldn't make a noise like that," declared Claudia. "Calves don't cry; they baa. Let's get down to facts. Just look at the blackberries. We must come here and get some."

They forced their way through a thicket of brambles beyond which they caught sight of a little girl standing forlornly, with torn frock and tear-stained face.

"What is the matter, little girl?" inquired Claudia coming up, but the only response she received was a shake of the head.

"Can't you tell us, little girl?" Joanne was the next to question, but no answer came except another shake of the head.

"Do you suppose she is deaf?" Winnie ventured. She put her face close to the child's and said in a loud voice: "Can't you hear us?"

This had the effect of making the child shrink away terror stricken.

"She hears all right," Claudia concluded. "Either she doesn't want to speak or she doesn't understand. She thinks you are scolding her."

Joanne had been observing the child closely. "She looks like a foreigner," she decided.

"*Parlez vous Français?*" said Claudia.

Still the puzzled look.

"*Sprachen sie Deutsch?*" this from Winnie, who made the other girls giggle, but brought only a hurt, wondering expression to the little girl's face.

"*Habla usted Espanol?*" inquired Joanne.

The child's look of perplexity cleared; "*Si, si, señorita,*" she replied joyfully.

"What is the matter? Why were you crying?" inquired Joanne in Spanish.

The child poured forth an excited recital to which Joanne gave an understanding attention. When the tale was told she turned to the others. "It seems that she came out to pick blackberries. Suddenly the cows came. She thought they were after her, and ran into the thicket pell-mell to escape them. When she got over her fright she found herself so confused that she didn't know which way to turn and wandered around getting more and more mixed up. She lives somewhere around here but hasn't an idea in which direction. Her name is Mariquita Carriles."

"We'd better take her along with us to the village," decided Claudia; "they will know at the post-office all about her. You tell her to come with us and we'll see that she gets home."

Joanne turned to the little Mariquita who willingly joined the group, evidently glad to have their protection against the fearsome cows, sidling up very close to Joanne as they passed the creatures, and answering her questions unhesitatingly, if not very intelligently.

It was not more than half a mile to the village and they were soon there making their inquiries of the genial storekeeper, who was also postmaster. Oh, yes, he knew all about Carriles. He was working on Joel Sykes's place, a very good man, from Cuba or some of those parts. He had been working for Joel all spring and had just brought his family up; they were living in the tenant house, reckoned they would stay all winter. Hard to get labor nowadays, and Joel thought

himself very lucky, for this Carriles had a couple of big boys who weren't above working.

"Is it far to Mr. Sykes's?" asked Joanne.

"About half a mile beyond the cross roads," answered the storekeeper.

Joanne consulted the other girls who were busy at the counter discussing the merits of various pieces of white goods.

"It will be ever so much out of our way," said Claudia. She turned to the storekeeper. "Will any one from here be going by the Sykes place this afternoon?" she asked.

"Pretty sure to be," was the answer. "If there isn't some one can come from Sykeses and get her. I'll call 'em up and tell 'em she's here."

This was declared a perfectly satisfactory plan, and after having made their purchases the girls started back saying good-bye to Mariquita, who was assured by Joanne that she needn't be afraid, for some one would come for her and take her home.

"It's lucky we came around that way," said Winnie as they started off. "That poor little thing might have wandered farther and farther into the woods and there is no knowing when they would have found her. Such a pretty little thing she is, too, with those big dark eyes and that smooth olive skin. There's another thing, too, Jo; this should get you your Interpreter's badge. You'll be plastered all over with badges by this time next year, if you keep on."

"I'm not thinking of badges just now," returned Joanne, "but I am thinking of what this will mean to Pablo. It will be a great thing for him to have neighbors to whom he can speak in his own language; he gets very homesick sometimes."

"Nice little Pablo," said Claudia; "he is always so polite and ready to do things for us; I surely am glad he will have companions, but to return to the question of badges. How many do you expect to earn this summer, Jo?"

"Oh, dear, I don't know; all I can, of course. Now that I have qualified as Second Class Scout, I am working for the First Class, but my goal is the Golden Eaglet."

"So say we all of us," Winnie put in. "Jo is nothing if not ambitious, Clausie."

"Why shouldn't she be? Mark my words she will reach her goal as soon as we do. How many badges have you earned already, Jo, I mean of those required for the Golden Eaglet?"

"Let me see," Joanne began checking them off on her fingers. "I have the one for Athletics, for Bird Hunter and Needlewoman. I am studying up on First Aid. Oh, yes, and I have my Pioneer's badge and the one for Personal Health. That's how many? Five, I believe, and I mean to add at least three more before we leave these diggings, which will make eight."

"You certainly are a whole team and the little dog under the wagon," said Winnie.

Joanne looked sober. "If only I don't fall down on the behavior part I shall come out on top, I hope, but it is so hard to keep from flying all to pieces on occasions. I do think, though, that I am learning a little self-control. I can't always control my lachrymal glands but I don't howl."

"That is a lot gained," returned Claudia encouragingly. "You'll get there, Jo, never fear."

"You are such a dear old chirker up," responded Joanne gratefully. "Win administers bad tasting doses like castor oil or liver medicine, but you give me stimulating cordials. It's all right, Win; I need the castor oil sometimes, and you are a corking good doctor when you hold my nose and pour it down my throat. I class you with Cousin Sue, who doesn't spare me."

"Oh, but Jo," said Winnie in a distressed tone, "I don't mean to be horrid. If I didn't love you so much I wouldn't call you down when I see you need it."

"Just so; you are a friend in need, and I want you to know I value my friend, Miss Merryman, very, very highly."

"There's Pablo," said Claudia as they approached the river farm. "Let's tell him about Mariquita, such a pretty name it is."

"It is the diminutive of Maria, or as we would say, of Mary," Joanne told her, "just as Juana is the Spanish for Joanne."

Here they came up to Pablo. He was sitting by the

roadside, having tethered Chico near by. "I am thinking perhap you are fatigue," he said, "so I come with the leetel 'orse." Pablo, like Unc' Aaron, could never get used to the idea that the girls, generally, would rather walk than ride at such times as these.

So to spare his feelings, Winnie, at Joanne's urging, mounted the little pony, and galloped off, leaving the others to follow on foot, and to tell Pablo about the Carriles family.

CHAPTER XI

HAWAIIAN PINEAPPLE

THE girls had all gone off blackberrying. The report of a spot where they grew "as big as your thumb" inspired an ambition to fill the buckets, to can, to make pies, puddings, flummery, or anything else suggested. So silence reigned in the little camp. The canal boats passed up or down once in a while, the tramp of the mules and the cries of the drivers announcing their coming. The Virginia shores showed misty green under the July skies; the river shone silver bright, or displayed dancing flecks where it dashed over the rocky portions. Just above the rapids it took a twist and was navigable for small boats quite a distance, running either side of two small islands.

From the nearer of these islands a column of smoke curled slowly up, and any one watching would see a canoe presently dart from the shore and come speeding down the river, turning off into a little creek which emptied itself into the stream just above the lock. Somewhat later two boys came down the road and stopped before the lodge, looking it up and down, then they mounted the steps to the rustic porch and knocked at the door. No answer to the knock. Then they called: "Heigho, girls!" No sound except the

splashing of an approaching canal boat as it slipped through the water.

"They can't all be asleep," decided one of the boys at last.

"Gone on a hike, probably," said the other. "Shall we wait?"

"We might take it easy for a few minutes. I say, Hal, this is a dandy place."

"No better than our island. Give me old Longshanks every time. Of course this has more conveniences and is all right for girls, but the island for mine."

"View's better," protested his companion, Chesney Lacey; "it must be something magnificent from the top of those cliffs."

"Let's go up and see. We can leave a message for the girls. If they are off on a hike they may not get back the whole afternoon."

"Very true. Here goes, then. Got a bit of paper?"

Hal pulled a pad from his pocket and Chet, supplying a pencil, wrote:

"To the Girl Scouts of Sunflower Troop—greeting! You are invited to supper on Longshanks Island tomorrow afternoon. Boats will meet you at five o'clock at the wharf by the mill on Stony Creek.

Signed:
HAL FOSDICK,
CHET LACEY."

Hal read the note which Chet handed him. "You don't say it is the troop that invites them," he criticized.

"No, it makes it more mysterious not to say that. Girls love mysteries; they won't know whether just you and I are camping up there or whether it is the whole outfit; we'll just leave 'em in doubt till they get up there."

Hal nodded approval, and after pinning the note to one of the rough cedar posts of the porch they went off to mount the hill behind the lodge.

Joanne's sharp eyes were the first to discover the note when the girls returned with berry-stained fingers but with brimming buckets. "Look! look!" she cried. "See what I've found."

Miss Dodge took the note which Joanne handed to her, and, after glancing over the contents, read it aloud.

Immediately she was overwhelmed by questions: "Oh, Miss Dodge, you will let us go, won't you? Did you know the boys were there? Is it the whole troop of Boy Scouts or just those two? Did you know about their inviting us? When did they come?"

"Stop, stop, girls, and take breath," said Miss Dodge. "I don't know any more about it than you do, but perhaps Miss Chesney does; do you, Nan?"

"I knew the boys were looking for a camping place up this way, but that is the extent of my knowledge," Miss Chesney told her.

"But we may go, mayn't we?" said Esther pleadingly.

"If we can get all these berries disposed of in time."

"Oh, we'll go to it early and get most of them canned. We will have some for supper, and make a pudding for dinner to-morrow, then if anybody decides to make jam it can be started, and finished the next day," said Claudia.

"How can we let the boys know that we'll come?" questioned Winnie.

"What's the matter with signalling?" returned Betty Streeter. "Won't that be the best way, Miss Dodge?"

"Yes, unless you are all too tired."

"But we needn't do it this evening. We can't all be fussing with the blackberries at the same time; we'll have to take turns. We could go to-morrow morning to that hill just beyond the mill; they could see us from there."

"Some one could take Chico and go this evening, if that would be better," said Joanne.

"Better still," returned Miss Dodge. "Will you go, Joanne?"

"Oh, Miss Dodge, I'm afraid I'm not up to the mark in signalling. I'd feel so flat if I did it wrong."

"Then, Claudia, you go."

Claudia, being an expert with the flags, was only too willing and started off to get Chico at once in order that she might be back by supper time. Joanne stood

watching her as she ran along. "I surely must get busy with those flags," she said to herself. "I don't think I have realized how important they could be. There is really no other way to reach the boys." And the rest of her spare time that evening she devoted to the practising of signalling.

The blackberries were all out of the way by afternoon of the next day, all except one kettle of jam which was to be finished up later. A huge blackberry dumpling was had for dinner, many glasses of jelly stood a-row on the window sills, while the girls had scoured the country for jars in which to can their fruit. Mrs. Scraggs had lent them one big preserving kettle, Mrs. Clover another, so they progressed rapidly. Joanne was very proud of her six jars and her five glasses, but, as it is not easy to make blackberry jelly, she had her doubts about the proper consistency of this.

By five o'clock the whole party of girls was gathered upon the bank of Stony Creek. It was a lovely stream overarched by drooping trees, bordered by ferns and bushes whose reflections made a green margin for the rippling water, and fed by many cool springs which ran in little rills down the hills.

It was not long before three boats pushed into the stream. Hal and Chet were in the foremost. Cheers, salutes and shouts of welcome met them as the girls crowded closer to the water.

"How many are there of you?" questioned Hal.

"Fourteen girls, their captain and their lieutenant," he was told.

"All right. I reckon we've plenty of grub. Come along, step in, and we'll take you to the island of Delight. Six in the first boat. We're counting on some of you to row. Who wants to?"

"I! I!" the offers came promptly, and presently the boats had left the shady creek and were out upon the broad waters of the Potomac, here a mile wide. It was something of a pull, but soon the girls saw white tents gleaming amidst the green of the island, and beheld the smoke of fires blue against the background of foliage. A dozen boys met them and the fun began.

"You're company," said Chet, "and are not to do one thing to help us."

"Except to help us eat," put in Pete Lowe. "Did you bring the milk, Chet?"

"Nothing doing except in the direction of a tin cow or so. You don't mind canned milk in your cocoa, do you, girls?"

Nobody minded, and Chet brought the cans from the boat, handing them over to Pete whose office it was to make the cocoa. Milt Seymour was busy at one fire frying fish, Jimmy Carey was stirring pancakes and watching a second fire, Peter squatted before a third over which a gypsy kettle hung. Other boys skurried around, in and out the mess tent, and finally it was announced that the meal was ready, and a good one it was: fried fish, potatoes baked in the

ashes, pancakes, cocoa, sliced pineapple and small cakes.

"Who thought of getting this good Hawaiian pineapple?" asked Winnie. "We never once thought of having it, and one can do a lot of things with it. I move we order some from town."

"Second the motion," replied Claudia. "Joanne knows a Girl Scout who lives in Hawaii, don't you, Jo?"

"How interesting," exclaimed Betty. "Does she write to you, Jo?"

"Yes," Joanne answered; "I heard from her not long ago. She said the Girl Scouts of Hawaii were asking to have white uniforms instead of the khaki ones, because the white ones are so much cooler."

"That is true, and I hope they'll get them. There are days when I feel as if I should expire even in this latitude, and what must it be farther south," said Winnie.

"Our Southern girls have asked for the white ones, too," Joanne said. "I read that in a paper not long ago."

"What's your Hawaii girl's name?" asked Pete, softly thrumming on his ukulele. "Tell us something about her. What does she look like?"

"Her name is Lucretia Lee. She is quite pretty with soft brown curly hair and bright blue eyes. Her father has a pineapple plantation; I believe he raises sugar cane, too. I wish you could see Lulu dashing

about in the surf; she swims like a duck. They call her Lulu for short. Her grandfather was a naval officer, and was a great friend of my grandfather's."

Pete listened to this description and then sat still fingering his ukulele with his eyes fixed on the Maryland shore. Presently he struck a wailing chord and began to sing:

"In Honolulu-lulu-lulu
Where the kindly natives generally behave,
Lives a girlie, hair so curly,
Eyes as bright as sparkling sunlight on the wave.
She's my pineapple, Hawaiian pineapple,
My little Lala, Lila, Lula Lee,
She's the Girl Scout for this Boy Scout,
Though she lives so far away across the sea.

"There she raises cane, sweet sugar cane,
And she's sweet as all the sugar plums you hoard;
She goes riding, sometimes colliding,
As she dashes through the breakers on a board.
Chorus: She's my pineapple, etc.

"She weaves garlands, pretty garlands,
Which she hangs around her neck, a flowery chain,
Lead me there, boys, but beware, boys,
Lest your Petey never comes to you again.
Chorus: She's my pineapple, etc."

The other boys had stopped twanging their various musical instruments, leaving Pete sole performer. As he ended his ditty with a sweeping flourish of the

strings there came an enthusiastic clapping of hands. "Oh, Pete, that was wonderful!" cried the girls.

Hal went up and pounded his friend on the back. "Pete, you old top," he said, "I didn't think you had it in you. Where have you kept your talent all this while?"

"It required 'the time, the place and the loved ones all together,' to bring it out," responded Pete. "This is a combination one doesn't get more than once in a lifetime. Such an opportunity may not occur again."

"Do you think you could remember the words?" Joanne asked him. "I would love to write them down to show to my grandfather."

"Oh, gee!" exclaimed Pete suddenly overcome with confusion, "I couldn't remember them; I just made them up as I went along."

"That's all right, all right," spoke up Chet; "all the samee they are going down to posterity in written form, for I took them down in short-hand. I've had an exhibition of Pete's powers before and knew what to expect. I'll write them out in proper shape and give them to you, Jo."

"Oh, I say ——" began Pete in protest.

"Nothing doing, old chap," Chet interrupted. "I made up my mind last time that our troubadour's lay should not sink into oblivion, so I was prepared."

"Good for you, Chet," spoke up one of the other boys. "We want that song for our own use. All original compositions are exclusively the property of

this establishment, Pete, so if you don't want us to have them you must hie you to your attic and coax the Muse in solitude."

"Oh, but, fellows, I don't make a practice of doing this sort of thing," explained Pete with an air of having been caught in something unbecoming to his dignity. "It just comes into my head like this and I out with it."

"No apologies necessary," said Hal. "Do it some more, and receive the thanks of the committee on entertainment."

The matter was dropped, but from this time out Pete received the nickname of Troub, short for troubadour, and his song became a favorite with his troop as well as with the Sunflower girls.

The supper party at last broke up, and the girls went home when the afterglow still reddened the water and a rising moon glittered above the tree-tops. The boys saw them safely to the lodge, and went off singing: "She's my pineapple."

Of course there must be a like party for the boys when the girls displayed their powers as cooks, and quite outdid themselves. On this occasion Pablo was asked to be one of the party. Then the boys clamored for Chico, who was brought down and put through his paces, Pablo showing some marvellous feats of horsemanship which brought him great applause and made more than one boy envious.

There were other frolics, too, when girls and boys

went picnicking, farther down the river. There was a corn roast by moonlight in a big field when the first corn was ready to be eaten. There was a straw ride to a country church festival five miles away. Besides these were many excursions on the river which was a never failing attraction. Meantime Claude Lafayette was provided with an ample outfit, Mariquita's brothers and Pablo became close friends, while the girls baked and kept house, washed, ironed, sewed and studied, played much, and worked no more than was good for them.

All this time no accidents of any account had befallen. A slight burn, a cut finger, a blistered heel about covered the list. But one day when Joanne and Winnie were on their way to the lock to telephone for some supplies, they heard a sudden commotion in the house where dwelt their young protégé, Claude Lafayette. Screams, wails, a babble of excited talk issued from the open doorway. Both girls started on a run toward the house. "Hurry," cried Winnie over her shoulder, "something is wrong."

Joanne kept close at Winnie's heels and they entered the house without ceremony to find Mrs. Scraggs in the kitchen, her baby on her lap and the other children crowded around her crying.

"What's the matter?" asked Winnie sharply as she came in.

"Oh, my baby! My baby! He's drowned! He's drowned!" wailed Mrs. Scraggs.

"Give him to me," said Winnie peremptorily, and without waiting took the child in her arms and held him with head and face down. "Jo," she said, "go telephone for the doctor. Tell him to come as quick as he can. Tell him what has happened."

Joanne ran out and sent the message, then back she hurried to hear Winnie say: "I believe he is alive, Mrs. Scraggs; I hope so. We shall want hot water and blankets. Jo, you know what to do, just see to getting what we need. There! There! he is breathing. How long was he in the water, Mrs. Scraggs?"

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know. I was hanging out the clothes and left him on a chair. He must have pitched forward into the tub. It was full of water. I had left it on the floor. I thought one of the other children would watch him, but maybe they didn't see him fall."

Joanne, finding that she must take things into her own hands, had stirred up the fire, set the kettle to boil, and was rummaging around for blankets while Winnie stripped the wet clothes from the baby and was wrapping him up in such dry things as were at hand. Mrs. Scraggs had completely lost her head and could do nothing but wring her hands and cry.

By the time Joanne appeared with the blankets she was able to find, the doctor's automobile was at the door. He had covered the three miles in an incredibly short space of time. "What's this? What's this?" he said as he bustled in. "A child drowned?"

hand began to signal to Longshanks Island immediately opposite.

"Oh, if they only see," she breathed as she sent forth the message: "Woods on fire! Come quick!"

She could see boys walking about on the island, some busy with the boats, some going in or out of the tents.

For a little time she felt that her signals were of no use, but presently she saw a boy standing still, and evidently looking in her direction, then she saw him gesticulating and pointing. Next she saw a number of boys running to the boats, and in another moment, to her great relief, she read the answering message from one of them: "We understand. We're coming."

For a moment she was undecided whether to wait on the cliff or to go down to the spot where they would be likely to land and which was some distance below. "We'll gain time if I meet them there," she said to Chico. "We must make it, Chico; I trust to you. I believe you will take me safely." Chico, who had not moved since she dismounted, gave a little whinny as Joanne turned him toward the brink of the cliff. There was a little winding path which led down to the river. It was steep, oh, so steep, rocky and forbidding. For the breadth of a second, Joanne held her breath and pressed her teeth hard against her lower lip, then she summoned up all her courage. "You can make it, Chico; you are a mountain boy," she said encouragingly, and began the descent.

Down, down the sure-footed little pony went, picking his way among scrubby underbrush, over rocks, around bare gnarled roots, but never once did he falter and never once did Joanne lose her faith in him. The first boat was just coming in when pony and rider reached the foot of the cliff. First the boys stared, then with one accord they gave a wild cheer.

"Good for you, Jo!" they cried. "That was some stunt! Where's the fire?"

"Over here in the woods. I didn't want to lose any time by coming around. I'll go ahead and show you where it is. I thought you boys would know best how to put it out, besides there are more of you than there are men on the nearest farm. Just follow me."

She trotted along on Chico, the boys following at as smart a gait as possible, and before long they saw the fire ahead of them. From creeping along it was beginning to mount to the trees above which the smoke curled in a steady column. In a few minutes the second boat-load of boys arrived, having been directed to the spot by the arrow sign left by the first boys as they went along. They all consulted together for a moment.

"Water's not much use," declared Hal Fosdick; "what we should do is to plough up or dig a ditch so the fire can't go beyond a certain point. Some one should go to the nearest farm and notify them so they can bring the tools we need; the rest can stay here and do what can be done to put out the fire."

"I'll go," offered Joanne. "Chico can take me in a jiffy."

"I think you've done enough," said Hal, "you and Chico, both, but I believe you would be the best one to go as it will leave more workers here."

So Joanne galloped off, but at the edge of the woods she met two men on horseback. "What's up?" cried the foremost one. "It looks like there was fire over yonder in the woods, and it seemed too big for one of these here camp fires the boys and girls are starting up every now and then."

"It will be a big fire if it isn't stopped," Joanne told him, "but it wasn't started by the girls or boys, that I know. I happened to see it when it was only rather a small fire, and I got the boys to come over from the island; they are there now, but they want spades and ploughs and things as quick as they can get them. The fire can't be put out with just water. They want to dig a ditch to keep it from spreading."

"Good idea," responded the man. "Come on, Dick, we'll get the things back here as quick as we can. From the looks of it there's no time to lose."

"Shall I come?" asked Joanne.

"Reckon you don't have to; your horse isn't a plough horse," said the man with a grin as he galloped off.

Joanne went back to the boys. "I met them right at the edge of the woods," she said. "They're coming with the things."

The boys were beating out the fire as best they could, clearing away underbrush which could be easily ignited, and breaking off dead branches which would feed the flames. These died down a little as they reached the greener trees, but broke out afresh from time to time.

It was not long before the men with spades and ploughs arrived upon the scene; they were reinforced by others who had seen the smoke and who had provided themselves with axes in order to cut away trees which might carry the fire farther.

It was a smoky, smutty crew which finally rested from the labor of making all safe. Several of the Boy Scouts volunteered to stay on watch in order that no flying brand which might ignite dry wood should be overlooked, and the company dispersed. Joanne lingered just long enough to tell the boys that there would be open house at the lodge when they wanted something to eat, and went off to make his report to Miss Dodge.

It was her turn to be made a heroine, but somehow she felt less ready to claim her rights than she would have thought possible on that occasion when Winnie was so praised. "I am sorry, Miss Dodge," she said, as the girls flocked around her, "but I went outside of bounds; I just had to, for it didn't seem to me there was any other way, and every minute counted."

"It was certainly an emergency," Miss Dodge replied, "and you are quite excusable, although we were

all worried that you should be gone so long, until we heard what had happened."

"Who told you?"

"Unc' Aaron came over to say that the woods were on fire and that you had given the alarm. He had some marvellous tale of how you rode Chico down a sheer precipice, and that it was a wonder you didn't fall headlong. How was it, Joanne?"

Joanne glanced around at the eagerly listening girls. "It was entirely due to that darling, sure-footed Chico," she said. "I knew he was a mountain pony and could go where ordinary horses would be scared, so I just put him at it and he picked his way without even once stumbling."

Miss Dodge shook her head. "Pretty venturesome. Weren't you afraid, Joanne?"

"A little, at first, but I was so anxious to get to the foot of the cliff and meet the boys that I didn't think of anything else; besides I was excited, and you do things when you are excited that you wouldn't dare to do in cold blood."

"Just where was the place?" asked Miss Chesney.

"That cliffy one opposite Longshanks Island. I rode to the top and signalled to the boys."

"You signalled? What with?" asked Miss Dodge.

"My neckerchief and my handkerchief. I was so relieved when I saw they understood. Then I realized that they would come right over and land at the foot of the cliff, as near as they could, but I knew we

would lose time if I waited for them where I was, and that I'd better try to meet them, so I did."

"Do you mean to say that you rode right down that sheer cliff?" asked Claudia excitedly grabbing Joanne's arm.

"Why, yes," replied Joanne hesitatingly. "It wasn't so awful, and I have seen movie pictures of Italian soldiers going down much worse places on horseback."

Smothered ejaculations of "Oh!" were breathed by the girls.

"You're a perfect wonder!" cried Winnie; "isn't she, Miss Dodge? I'd no more dare to do that than I would fly."

"I wouldn't in the least mind flying," returned Joanne laughingly, "and I mean to, some day."

"I haven't a doubt but you will," said Miss Chesney with emphasis.

It was on the tip of Joanne's tongue to say: "At least no one can deny that I can ride," but she realized that this would sound too boastful and she went off to her tent to get rid of some of the smoke and dust of the afternoon's adventure.

"I always knew there was lots in Jo," said Claudia as the heroine went off, "but she certainly is getting ahead by leaps and bounds."

"Too leapy and boundy for me," responded Esther Rhodes, who was often inclined to be a little envious; "she'll get ahead of us all if we don't look out."

"Well, suppose she does," Winnie spoke up; "somebody has to be first and why shouldn't she be?"

"But she is the very newest member of the troop, and it isn't fair."

"Why isn't it?"

"Oh, because."

"That's no reason. You're jealous, Ess; that's what's the matter with you. Jo has never had half a chance; she's just had to wander around with her grandmother, and be fussed over and not allowed to do this because it was hoydenish, or do that because it might injure her health, yet all the time she should have been free to do the very things she is doing now. Her grandmother is a dear, but she is as old-fashioned and conventional as they make 'em, and expects to make Joanne after the pattern of her own youth which isn't the style nowadays. Jo is as bright as a button and I, for one, am mighty proud that she belongs to our troop and specially to our patrol; so should you be, Miss Jealousy."

Esther pouted, but, like the rest of the girls, was accustomed to Winnie's very frank way of dealing with a subject, a way which no one resented for very long, because no one could help loving Winnie, and in the end, thanking her for her wholesome truths.

Claudia, equally beloved, was more diplomatic, and presented her truths more palatably; as Winnie said: "Clausie always gives you a pill in jelly," so at this juncture she remarked: "Ess is too loyal to her troop

not to be proud of every one of its members, and she's too good a Girl Scout not to stand up for any girl that is criticized. I'll venture to say she would take up the cudgels for Joanne or any one of us if occasion required."

"Of course I would," maintained Esther. So were matters smoothed out, and never again was Esther heard to say that Joanne should not have all the credit she deserved.

Winnie found Joanne taking vigorous measures to get rid of her smudges. "I'm a perfect sight," she said. "Did you observe that lovely streak of smut upon my nose, and the lateral one across my cheek? I've scrubbed and scrubbed, but it was hard to get clean. I think I nearly am. What do you think?" She turned a softly reddened face toward her friend.

"I think you are a darling," answered Winnie catching her in her arms and kissing her. "Honest Injun, Jo, weren't you on the verge of nervous prostration when you reached the foot of that cliff?"

Joanne looked at the towel with which she was wiping her fingers. "Well no; I think I felt more excited and exultant than anything else. Do you know, Win, I'm rather dreading Gradda's knowing about it. I don't know what in the world she will say."

> "When Gradda heard it she was awfully vexed,
> And said, 'Joanne, what will you do next?'"

paraphrased Winnie laughing.

Joanne joined in the laugh. "That's just what she will say, but fortunately she won't have a chance to say it till I get there, which will not be for another week. Alas and alack! that it should be only one more week. Do you think I am dreadfully depraved, Win, because I am not crazy to join Gradda?"

"Silly! Of course not. Am I crazy to fly to the arms of my well-beloved parents? Are any of the girls? I wot not. Of course we shouldn't want an endless separation, but while we are in this heavenly spot and having the best sort of times we can't be expected to rejoice at leaving, especially when our parents are perfectly comfortable where they are."

"Well, I am glad you think that way about it, for I have been bringing myself to task for not being keener about going to join Gradda."

"I have warned you before, my young miss, not to take yourself too seriously. Miss Dodge says it doesn't do to be too introspective."

"Dear me, I don't think I could be accused of that," replied Joanne. "I have always thought I had never been enough so."

"Then don't begin to overdo it now. There are no half measures with you, old dear, and once you begin to turn yourself inside out you will bare your entire soul to self-censure and leave nothing nice and normal to live with."

"Oh, Win," protested Joanne, "you do say such funny things, but I understand what you mean, and

I'm sure I don't want to become a maudlin sentimentalist. There come two of the boys," she broke off. "Let's go see if there's anything they want."

They ran out to meet Hal and Chet who had come to borrow a few things. "We came off in such a hurry," they said, "that we didn't bring any of the stuff we usually carry with us. If you have a can opener to spare we'd be thankful for the loan. We've bought some odds and ends at the little shebang at the lock, but they haven't much of an assortment, and Mrs. Clover will let us have some milk."

"You'd better come up here to supper," said Winnie.

Hal shook his head. "Thank you, ma'am, but we can't quit our job. We must wait till all danger is past. I wonder who owns that bit of woods, by the way."

"Mr. Pattison does, doesn't he, Jo?" inquired Winnie.

"Yes, I think he does, though it isn't exactly a part of this tract."

"Then he's lost some of his timber, though not as much as he would have done if it hadn't been for you, Jo. Gee, Win, you should have seen Jo do that stunt of riding down the cliff! I declare my heart was in my mouth, so to speak, till I saw her land safe and sound."

"You mustn't give me the credit," spoke up Joanne; "it was entirely Chico's performance."

"Then he should have a medal for valor," said Chet.

"Let's give it to him," proposed Hal. "We'll get one ready and have the ceremony of bestowing the honor upon him. How'll that be, girls?"

"Great!" cried Winnie. "When will you come?"

"To-morrow afternoon, I think we can manage it. We'll get Mr. Travis to make the presentation speech." Mr. Travis was the boys' captain and could always be depended upon to fall in with any such plan.

The girls sought out a can opener and brought it to them with a glass of blackberry jam which was duly appreciated.

"You've saved our lives," cried Chet. "Instead of having mere paltry grub we now shall have a feast." And off they went.

The ceremony of decorating Chico found favor with every one, for the little pony was the pet of them all. Pablo was greatly excited over the prospect while Unc' Aaron was scarcely less so. Of course these two were invited to be present as were the Clover family and the Scraggses. Claude Lafayette by now had resumed his usual cherubic aspect and seemed no worse for his recent accident. He proudly wore one of his new frocks, while his sisters and brothers appeared in a state of at least visible cleanliness. They were constantly admonished by their mother to "set still and act pretty," but squirmed uneasily and were covered with confusion if any one spoke to them. No such bashfulness overcame Claude Lafayette. He was a

placid youngster and was among friends, therefore he babbled cheerfully, and gave squeals of delight at sight of this or that familiar face.

The girls had been busy all the morning baking gingerbread and making lemonade to serve at Chico's party, as they called it, and had everything ready by five o'clock, which was the hour set for the gathering. The spot selected was a stretch of meadow at the foot of the hill, half-way between the lodge and the lock. Here the company assembled, Mrs. Clover in a clean gingham frock, Mrs. Scraggs with much befrizzed hair and wearing a fussy, but crumpled, white waist with a lot of cheap jewelry, Mr. Scraggs, collarless, but with a clean shirt on, Mr. Clover and his big son respectable in light suits, Unc' Aaron sporting the coat he kept for high days and holidays. No one knew where he had acquired this proud possession, of dark blue with brass buttons and decorated with braid; probably it was an old army coat which some one had given him. With it he wore a fancy waistcoat and whatever pair of trousers that happened to be in fair condition. He stationed himself by the gate, like a sentinel, ready to open when Chico and his escort should appear.

Promptly at five o'clock was heard the sound of fife and drum. The girls who had been sitting around in groups on the grass sprang to their feet and stood in rank. The gate was opened by Unc' Aaron who bowed to the ground as Pablo appeared leading Chico

gaily caparisoned. The little pony pranced and curvetted at sound of the music so close to his heels, arching his neck and tossing his head in great style. The Boy Scouts followed and drew up in line opposite the girls; Chico was halted between the lines.

Then Mr. Travis stepped forward and said: "Señor Don Chico, it is my privilege to present to you on behalf of your friends and admirers this medal for distinguished service and valor." And he hung around Chico's neck a remarkable decoration contrived from a tin can and a piece of red flannel. The tin was cut in points and perforated upon its surface were the words: "To Chico for valor." Then followed the date. The flannel was cut in scallops and upon it was fastened the medal. A cord made of the flannel was attached to the whole.

After having hung the cord around Chico's neck Mr. Travis stepped back.

"Why don't you kiss him, or at least shake hands?" spoke up Joanne.

"If he had a hand ——" began Mr. Travis.

But here Pablo cried: "*Dame le mano,* Chico!" and up went one of Chico's forefeet to be shaken.

At this performance a shout arose which was followed by great applause as Joanne said: "Don't you want to give me a kiss, Chico?" and the little steed nodded his head, then laid it caressingly against Joanne's shoulder as she kissed him on the top of his nose.

After this every one wanted to examine the medal which was passed around to be admired.

"It just beats me out," said Mrs. Clover. "I wondered what in the world those boys wanted of red flannel when they came up and asked me if I had a piece. I thought they wanted it to bait frogs or something like that, and I hunted out an old shirt of Mr. Clover's to give 'em. It was some cut up but they said it would do."

"Well, I think it's some pretty," commented Mrs. Scraggs.

Here the boys struck up the national anthem, a salute to the flag was given, and then Chico was taken to his stable under the escort of Pablo, a patrol of Boy Scouts with Unc' Aaron bringing up the rear, and stepping more proudly than any other, head up, shoulders back, coat tails swinging. Thus ended Chico's party, so far as he was concerned.

CHAPTER XIII

UNEXPECTED GUESTS

IT was when she was passing around gingerbread that Joanne looked up to see her grandfather and her Cousin Ned coming toward her. She set down the plate quickly, almost upsetting the contents in Miss Dodge's lap, and rushed forward. "Grad!" she cried, "Cousin Ned! When did you come?"

"We've been watching you all from a spot here on the hill," said her cousin. "What's the idea? Why this performance with Chico?"

"It's Chico's party. He did a fine thing the other day and the boys have decorated him for it. It has been such fun. Did you see him shake hands with Mr. Travis?"

"We saw some sort of goings on but we couldn't make out what it was all about," her grandfather told her. "We couldn't find any one at home at Clover's and wandered around a while till we saw something was going on down in the meadow, so we watched proceedings. How are you, Pickings?"

"Fine as a fiddle."

Her grandfather held her off and looked her up and down. "You've grown; I declare you've grown. You don't look much fatter, but I vow you have pink cheeks. July weather and you with pink cheeks; that's a new state of things. That will be news for your grandmother."

"How is Gradda?"

"Very well. She gets up an alarm about you once in a while, but it doesn't last long. She is looking forward to seeing you next week. Ready to go?"

Joanne looked a little rueful. "I want to see Gradda, of course," she said, "but I don't want to leave here. We have had such good times; you don't know what fun we have had. The girls are so nice and Miss Chesney and Miss Dodge are dears."

"But what's all this about Chico? What did he do to distinguish himself?" asked Mr. Pattison.

"Well," said Joanne, "there was a fire in the woods, and the quickest way to get help was to let the boys know, so Chico went down a very steep cliff and the boys got the word. Chico was wonderful. Sometimes he had to go on his haunches and fairly slide, but he never balked."

The two men exchanged glances. "Who was riding him?" asked Dr. Selden. "I don't suppose he was like Balaam's ass and could speak for himself."

Joanne looked down. "Well," she began, "if you must know I was riding him."

Her cousin took her by the shoulders and gave her

a little shake. "You little monkey! So it was you who saved my timber. I heard about the fire and that's why I came up to-day."

"But you know it was really Chico," returned Joanne with a little appealing look at her grandfather whose face showed various emotions. "I was perfectly safe on Chico, Grad."

He took her face between his hands and kissed her forehead. "How you do remind me of your father; it is just the sort of thing he would do."

Joanne took his arm and cuddled close. "I love to hear you say that," she whispered. "Then you're not angry with me, Grad."

"How could I be? I am very proud of my brave little lass."

"Then let's go and get some gingerbread if there is any left. I want to show you off to the girls and boys."

"Such an inducement," laughed her grandfather.

"Do you think Gradda will mind very much when you tell her?" asked Joanne.

"Mind what? That you want to show me off?"

Joanne gave his arm a squeeze. "No, you precious goosey-gander, that I took that ride. You don't have to tell her exactly how steep the cliff is, do you?"

"Not if I don't know, myself. Nevertheless I want to have a look at it."

"How did you learn about the fire?" Joanne turned to her cousin.

"Dawson told me. Was it a big one, Jo?"

"Not so terribly big, but it might have been if the boys hadn't taken hold of it at once. It started in a small clump of trees, no one knows how, but Mr. Clover thinks some one was lighting a pipe or a cigar and threw the match away into a pile of dry leaves. There was a little open space around the trees, fortunately, and that made it easier to keep the fire back. If it had begun in the thick woods there is no telling where it would have stopped. As it was, the densest part of the woods is farther on, so by cutting away the underbrush and ploughing up the ground it didn't spread beyond that one spot. I was there and saw it all; it was very exciting."

"I'll be bound for you," returned Mr. Pattison. "Well, Jo, it seems to me that you are the fellow who should have had the medal."

"Oh, no," protested she, "I had all the fun; that was enough."

Mr. Pattison laughed, then shook his head, but did not utter what was in his mind.

By this time they had reached the groups still seated upon the grass of the meadow. No one seemed inclined to leave so long as the cake and lemonade lasted. The Scraggses partook liberally and often, while the boys were not far behind them. No one of these latter, however, but lay aside his portion of the feast when Dr. Selden and Mr. Pattison appeared. The former answered their salutes in true military style and

was soon in conversation with Mr. Travis while Mr. Pattison sought out Mr. Clover, after having thanked the boys for their work in putting out the fire.

Soon Unc' Aaron came up hat in hand, bowing low and saying to Mr. Pattison, "Escuse me, Mistah Ned, suh, but I comes to ax yo' requirements. Is yo' recision to congregate hyah to-night or does yuh return to de city?"

"Why, Unc' Aaron, I think we shall stay," was the answer. "Mr. Clover offers to put us up."

"Yas, suh, den yuh wants yo' cyah put in de ca'ige house."

"Yes, but I'll see to it myself. I may want to use it before night."

Unc' Aaron bowed himself off, Mr. Pattison watching him with a smile. "I believe the old codger just wanted to show himself off in his dress up coat," he said to Joanne. "He certainly is a character. I asked him once where he got that coat and he said: 'I jes' required it, suh,' and that was all I could get out of him. We're going over to the burnt district. Jo, don't you want to go along?"

"I'd love to, but I shall have to ask permission first, for it is out of bounds."

"Oho! so you are under military orders, are you?"

"In a manner. I wasn't court-martialed the other day when I went off to signal to the boys about the fire, but then that was a case of emergency."

"You signalled, did you, and got it all right?"

"Oh, yes, I have it down fine now."

"What else have you down fine?"

"Oh, I don't know; lots of things," replied Joanne suddenly diffident. She ran off returning with the permission she asked, and joined her cousin in front of Mr. Clover's house where the automobile stood.

When they reached the site of the fire Mr. Pattison looked over the charred circle where gaunt, blackened stumps stretched leafless arms toward the sky, and turning to his uncle he said: "That was a pretty close call. If the fire had gone beyond this grove of trees there is no knowing where it would have stopped." Then he looked down at Joanne. "See here, Pickings," he continued; "I want you to know that the freedom of this place is yours so long as I shall own it; the boys can have a free foot here, too. I give you the keys of the city, metaphorically speaking. There will not be any 'no trespassing' signs put up for you all. You can gather anything you want, berries, nuts, flowers, anything that grows on the property, even to a part of my share of the crops. How's that, Clover?"

He looked at Mr. Clover who nodded in response. "I reckon they're welcome to whatever they want to take, Mr. Pattison. I won't get out my shotgun even if I see them in my watermelon patch. They're mighty good neighbors to have, Mr. Pattison, mighty good neighbors. I'd like 'em here the year round."

Half-way back a punctured tire delayed them, so

Joanne and her grandfather decided to walk on leaving Mr. Clover and Mr. Pattison to remedy matters on the car.

"Don't you think I look well, Grad?" inquired Joanne as they set out on their walk.

"You look fine. How about the headaches?"

"I've had only one little one, and that was the day we went blackberrying and did some canning afterward. I think it was the hot sun that did it, but it didn't last long. I got so interested in the canning, you see, that I forgot about the headache."

Her grandfather smiled. "That does happen sometimes, but I wouldn't defy the sun too often."

"Oh, no, I don't; Miss Dodge sees to that. Don't you like her and isn't Miss Chesney a dear? The girls are dears, too. I never knew how nice girls could be, nor boys either, for that matter. We have had such good times together and I have come to know them all so well. It is such a comfort to have real intimate friends like Winnie and Claudia; I never had any before, you know. I have learned such a lot from them," she added reflectively.

"I appreciate all that," returned Dr. Selden. "It hasn't seemed possible under the circumstances, to give you these opportunities before, but certainly we are on the right track now. It was a great day when we met Mrs. Marriott, wasn't it?"

Joanne gave a little sigh as she said: "It was a great day, for I met the queen of women, the heroine of my

dreams, but I'm afraid I shall never, never see her again."

Her grandfather smiled. "Such a sentimental puss! You don't seem to be the same girl as that one who went dashing down the cliff on Chico."

Joanne laughed. "Win says I am more kinds of a girl than any one she knows; that most people have dual natures but that mine is polygonal."

Her grandfather laughed, too. "I hope she doesn't mean that you have many angles."

"Oh, no, I should hope not, too; she means I am many-sided, and I suppose I am."

"Don't try to analyze yourself too closely, my dear. Just try to do what is right and leave the dissection of your character to some one else."

"But one has to think about one's self sometimes, don't they?"

"Of course, so far as to question whether you are doing right or not, but to go too far in self-examination leads to morbidness, which isn't a good thing. I think I'll turn off here and go down to see Pablo and Unc' Aaron. You run along to the lodge and I'll see you there later."

Joanne obeyed while her grandfather walked on saying to himself: "The child has been too much with grown people. The best thing that could have happened to her is this association with girls of her own age, boys too, for that matter. As for the Girl Scout idea, well, it is the greatest thing out."

Joanne, meanwhile, went on to the meadow, which she found deserted except by Mr. Clover's cows which had been turned out after the milking hour. From farther on came sounds of applause, laughter, music. Joanne hurried ahead to come upon a merry crowd gathered in front of the lodge. The boys were still there in force, the girls, too, but added to these were Pablo and Unc' Aaron. The latter was nimbly dancing a breakdown to the music of Jimmy Carey's banjo. At every new exhibition of agility, at each wonderful step the applause broke forth, which excited the old darkey to greater feats, until he stopped from sheer exhaustion, just as Joanne reached the spot.

"Oh, Unc' Aaron," she cried, "why didn't you wait till I got here?"

"How I know yuh comin', little lady?" the old man gasped out.

"Oh, but won't you do it over again?" begged Joanne.

"Bref all gone, honey chile. I is too ole fo' sech extenuations of preformance. Wait twel I gits mah win' again."

"Then somebody else do something while Unc' Aaron rests," said Joanne. "You, Pablo."

Pablo shrugged his shoulders and gesticulated with outspread hands in protest. "I? what is it that I can do like to this old?" he said.

"You can play the guitar and sing a Spanish song,

I know you can, and I am sure you can dance; every Spaniard dances. Now don't say you cannot dance for us."

To hear was to obey when it was Joanne who commanded. Chet was quick to offer his guitar and Pablo strummed a mournful accompaniment to a melancholy song all about graveyards and tombs, but as no one except Joanne understood it, the effect was not as bad as it might have been, and Pablo received respectful thanks.

"Now the dance," Joanne said. "Can't somebody play a sort of Spanish dance? I wish we had castanets, then the music wouldn't matter."

"You play a Spanish dance, Chet," said Miss Chesney; "that little thing that I like, you know."

"Oh, yes." Chet turned up his guitar and began. Pablo soon caught the rhythm and started a pretty dance.

Presently Unc' Aaron, who was listening intently with head cocked to one side, drew from his pocket an assortment of treasures such as a rabbit's foot, a dried potato and a pair of bones. He restored the first two articles and then began to manipulate the bones so that they clacked in accord with the music of the guitar, Unc' Aaron keeping time with foot and head.

While this was going on Dr. Selden appeared, but was not noticed by the performers as he sat down some distance away. Joanne stole around and sat down be-

side him. "It sounds just like castanets, doesn't it?" she whispered.

He nodded, and joined in the applause.

"Now, Unc' Aaron, it's your turn again," cried Joanne.

But Unc' Aaron had caught sight of Dr. Selden and said with much dignity: "Yuh alls has to escuse me dis time. I been amusin' dese yer chilluns, doctah, suh, jes' fo' dey relectation. Jes' kickin' up some little monkey shines to mek 'em laugh. 'Tain't my customs to so do."

"I understand, Unc' Aaron, I understand," replied Dr. Selden trying to keep his face straight. "We older ones have to consider the children sometimes."

Unc' Aaron bowed grandly and walked off with great dignity to the intense amusement of those he left behind. Pablo, however, who was nothing if not loyal, quickly followed the old man, but before he caught up with him encountered Mr. Pattison.

"What's been going on down there?" inquired that gentleman.

"Some musics and dances," returned Pablo.

"Yes, yes. Sorry I missed it. Who were the dancers, Pablo? You?"

"For one, I; also the Unc' Aaron."

"You don't say so! The old codger!" Mr. Pattison turned and called: "Here, Unc' Aaron, I want to speak to you."

Unc' Aaron retraced his steps and came up, hat in

hand. "Yas, suh, Mistah Ned. Has yuh desiahs to speak to me?"

"Yes. What's this I hear about you dancing? An old fellow like you. Aren't you ashamed to be setting such an example? I'm surprised at you; it's scandalous." Mr. Pattison spoke with assumed severity.

Unc' Aaron eyed him for a moment to make sure that he was not in fun, but Mr. Pattison kept a grave face difficult though he found it to do so. "Yuh reads de good Book, Mistah Ned?" asked Unc' Aaron presently.

"Read the Bible? Why, of course."

"Den yuh knows what de good Book say. Good Book say: mus' not jedge, Mistah Ned, mus' not jedge."

This was too much for Mr. Ned. He threw back his head and laughed heartily. "You're too much for me, Unc' Aaron," he said. "Here's fifty cents for you, and Pablo, here's a quarter for you." So saying the young man went down-hill to repeat the conversation to the young people, while Unc' Aaron walked on chuckling.

This was the last frolic of the season, for in a few days the little lodge was deserted and the girls scattered, north, south, east and west, not to meet again till autumn.

Joanne and her grandfather joined Mrs. Selden at a small hotel in the mountains, a short distance from where Mrs. Ned Pattison's sister lived. One could

scarcely call it a hotel, though it was dignified by the name of Laurel Inn, for it was simply a rambling old house to which a wing had been added, and which afforded room for about twenty guests. It was kept by two sisters who prided themselves upon the class of their boarders. It suited Mrs. Selden exactly. She enjoyed sitting on the broad porch with other elderly ladies who swayed back and forth in their rocking chairs, chatted amiably over their fancy work, and exchanged patterns for tatting or crocheted lace.

Poor little Joanne found it rather dull after the companionship of her girl friends. But she had made a steady resolve to be cheerful no matter what, and had determined to work at certain tests so that she might win more badges when the time came. So one might find her any time sitting under a tree poring over her Morse code or studying her First Aid textbook.

Among the young married women were several with small children. Most of these had nurses with them, but one rather delicate looking mother cared for her child herself. Joanne noticed that when almost every one else went off for a nap in the afternoon, Mrs. Hooper sat out with her little boy, keeping him as far from the house as she could in order that he might not disturb the nappers. One rainy day, however, they were housed, and it was as much as Mrs. Hooper could do to keep the little one quiet.

Joanne, sitting in a corner reading, looked up once

in a while to see the baby fretting and his mother trying her best to entertain him. Finally Joanne could stand it no longer. Down went her book and she hurried to where Mrs. Hooper sat by the window.

"Let me play with Bertie a while, won't you?" she said.

"Why, my dear, I'm afraid he will bother you," returned Mrs. Hooper.

"Oh, no, he won't," Joanne assured her. "Let us see how it works, and if he fusses I'll give in."

"These rainy days are so trying," returned Mrs. Hooper. "Bertie gets so restless when he can't go out."

"I get restless myself," Joanne answered. "My grandmother thinks I will melt away entirely if a raindrop falls on me, not that she thinks I am made of sugar, but of some very meltable material."

Mrs. Hooper laughed. "You certainly are sweet to offer to amuse my boy. I don't like to take him out on the sun porch where the other children and the nurses are; he is so little, and I don't enjoy the society of the nurses particularly. Probably they wouldn't enjoy mine, so I generally keep Bertie to myself."

In a short time Master Bertie became so satisfied with his entertainer that his mother absorbed herself in a book, but finally put back her head against the chair and closed her eyes.

"Poor dear," said Joanne to herself, "I don't suppose she ever has a chance to take a nap, for the baby

has his in the morning, and who but a baby wants to sleep at ten o'clock?" A sudden thought struck her. "Good!" she cried, "I'll see if I can't make a bargain!"

She played with Bertie till sounds from the various rooms overhead showed the naps were over and that the ladies were arraying themselves for evening. Then Mrs. Hooper came over to where the two were.

"I really believe I have had forty winks," she said, "and it has done me a lot of good. Bertie wakes me up pretty early and I don't often get a chance to nap. Has he been a good boy?"

"Good as gold," replied Joanne. "He is a darling, and we have had a real good time, haven't we, Bertie?"

Bertie looked up solemnly at his mother. "S'e was a g'eat big bear," he said, "but s'e couldn't get me 'cause I lived under a s'air."

"You certainly have the faculty of amusing a child," said Mrs. Hooper, "and you don't know how I thank you."

"I liked it," said Joanne simply, "and I wish you would let me strike a bargain with you. Won't you please let me take care of Bertie two hours a day? Then you could have a nap and I could win my badge for Child Nursing. You see I am a Girl Scout and that is one of the tests I want to take. I'm just bent and determined to be a Golden Eaglet, and I'm working awfully hard to get all the badges I shall have to have.

This would give me a fine chance, so it would be a fair exchange."

"Why, my dear child, it seems to me that I shall be getting the best of the bargain."

"Oh, no, you won't. It will be fine for me, for I don't see how I could ever take two hours for a whole month, except in vacation time when there is no school. I should be too busy after I go back to the city."

Mrs. Hooper was thoughtful for a moment, then she said: "Very well, I agree on one condition, and that is you are to select any two hours a day that may be most convenient. You might not want to be tied down every afternoon; you might want to go somewhere, or do something; in that case you must feel perfectly free to come and tell me. If you agree to do this I will accept your very generous offer."

"All right," responded Joanne, "only it isn't generous; it is quite selfish, for it works out for my benefit."

"And mine," insisted Mrs. Hooper.

So from this time on Joanne became Bertie's self-instituted nurse for a part of every day, and became so attached to the really lovable little fellow that she regretted giving him up when the time came that she must.

CHAPTER XIV

HERE'S WHERE I COOK

THE summer passed quietly and not unprofitably for Joanne. There were fewer arguments with her grandmother and only upon one occasion did she dissolve into tears, a shower which was soon over, at that. Of course she missed the girls, Winnie with her rosy face and candid speech, Claudia, gracious and helpful. Even the presence of Esther, argumentative and a trifle given to envy, would have been acceptable, but on the whole Joanne felt that she had been able to get on pretty well, and certainly had added to her attainments. She counted up the tests which she felt able to take for new badges and felt a glow of pleasure as she realized that she was nearing her goal. She had not lost her love of the shining river but found that the mountains, too, had their charm, and that she would be sorry to leave them.

The day came, however, when she was back again in the city, eager for school to begin, and looking forward with happiness to the first rally. But, alas! that

old quotation about the "best laid plans of mice and men," was to be all too fittingly applied in her case.

There was a good deal of trouble in getting the house in proper running order. Servants were hard to get, men to put down carpets and rugs still scarcer. Mrs. Selden fussed and fumed, worried and worked more than she should have done, but at last two maids were procured, a cook and a housemaid. For a week things went on fairly well, considering Mrs. Selden's very particular ways, her demands and exactions, then came a Sunday morning the very day before school should begin, and the domestic machinery was clogged.

Joanne came down at the usual hour. She found her grandfather in the library reading. "Where's Gradda?" asked Joanne.

"I persuaded her to have her breakfast in bed," said Dr. Selden. "She is all tired out and needs a good rest. She will be ill if she keeps on at the rate she has been going. She is not used to grappling with these new conditions and takes it hard. Suppose you go out, Joanne, and tell the cook to send up her breakfast when it is ready." He looked at his watch. "It is getting pretty late; it should certainly be ready by now."

Joanne went out to the dining-room. The shutters were unopened, the table not set. "Well, I declare," murmured the girl, "Hester isn't here yet. I don't see why the cook couldn't have attended to her work."

She went on to the kitchen. Darkness reigned here. There was no fire in the range, not a sign of break-

fast. "Well, of all things!" exclaimed Joanne. "I wonder if those two horrid creatures have gone off for good and all." She went up the back stairs to the servants' rooms. Not a sign of their possessions. Everything had been packed up and taken away. "That certainly does beat the Dutch!" said Joanne. "Well, there's one thing about it, Gradda shall not know till she has had her breakfast."

Back to the library she went to report to her grandfather. "What do you think, Grad?" she cried. "Those two wretches have taken French leave. Their week was up and Gradda paid them. They've taken every stitch of their clothes and have cleared out. The dining-room and kitchen are as dark as Egypt, no fire in the range and not a sign of breakfast."

"What?" Dr. Selden sprang to his feet. "This is a pretty how-do-you-do! Sunday, your grandmother half ill, and no one to do a thing!"

"You blessed old dear, that's just where you're mistaken. There is some one to do several things. If you can keep Gradda from kicking over the traces I'll do the rest."

"You?"

"Yes, kind sir, if you please. Haven't I cooked many a breakfast and dinner, too, at camp? I am a dabster at it. If you wouldn't mind opening the shutters I'll fly to work and get things ready in the shake of a sheep's tail. I can use the gas range, you see. Suppose you don't go up to Gradda yet. We can

make believe we think she is asleep; maybe she is. If we have fruit, coffee, eggs and toast I think we can get along, don't you?"

"Admirably."

"I could make some biscuits, but that would take too long. Come, Grad, us to the fray."

In a few minutes things were astir in the kitchen. Joanne had her grandmother's tray ready in an incredibly short space of time, and very daintily laid it was. At the last moment Joanne dashed out into the small enclosure at the back, which was dignified by the name of "the garden," and from there gathered two or three bright nasturtiums which she placed on the tray, to brighten it up, she said.

"Now, Grad, you can take it up," she called to her grandfather. "I'll have your breakfast ready by the time you get back. How do you like your egg, hard or soft?"

"Three minutes," replied Dr. Selden, taking the tray from her hands.

"Then don't stay any longer than that, for I am going to put it in right away. Everything else is ready. And please don't on any account tell Gradda the cook isn't here."

The doctor went off and Joanne scurried around to have everything on the table by the time he returned. "Dear me," she said to herself, "I shouldn't have put the eggs in till we have had our fruit. I know what I can do, I'll coddle them; they'll be nicer anyhow, and

it won't hurt them to stand in the hot water. I'll keep the toast in the oven and open the door."

She was at her place at table by the time her grandfather returned. "I hope you don't mind eating with the cook," she said as she sat down.

"Why should I?" the doctor returned. "I am the butler."

Joanne laughed and answered, "I'll have to call you James then, and you can call me Cook. What did Gradda say?"

"I didn't give her a chance to say much. I told her that Hester hadn't come yet, and that I thought she might get faint so I had brought up her breakfast myself. She looked at the flowers and asked who put them there. I told her you had arranged the tray, and then I skipped out before she had time to ask any more questions."

"You were a very tactful butler. Bring out your plate, James, and help me to take in breakfast."

The doctor arose with alacrity to bring in the coffee while Joanne followed with the eggs and toast. She felt quite important to be sitting at the head of the table serving the coffee. Her grandfather took the cup she passed him and stirred it with a critical air, then he tasted it.

"Why, Joanne, it's fine," he said with an air of surprise.

"Humph!" she retorted, "that sounds as if you expected it wouldn't be fit to drink."

"To tell you the truth I had my doubts. Where did you learn how?"

"At camp, of course. Is your egg right? I think they're nicer coddled than just plain boiled, more digestible, too."

"How do you know that?"

"Oh, Miss Dodge told me. I'll get some more toast; I'm keeping it hot."

"It's mighty good toast, too," commented her grandfather as she went out. "Isn't it the butler's duty to bring it in?"

"The cook will have to do it this time, for the butler isn't accustomed to gas stoves and may burn his fingers."

"If this keeps up we'd better get an electric toaster," said Dr. Selden as he helped himself to the toast Joanne brought in. "By the way, what about our dinner? It is quite plain to me that we shall have no cook to-day."

"James, I am surprised at you," returned Joanne. "Me 'ere with han hexcellent character, me what 'as cooked for has many has fourteen hat table, to 'ave such himputations cast at me. Hit's hinsulting, that's what hit his. I can take han hinsult has good has annybody, but there his limits, and Hi don't suffer nobody to say I ain't no cook."

Her grandfather tossed aside his napkin and came over to her. "You little monkey," he said tousling her curly head, "where did you pick up that lingo?"

"Oh, in places we have been and out of books. I don't think I got my aitches all in the right place, but never mind. There was a head chambermaid at the hotel in Bermuda who was an excellent model. I used to find her aitches all over the place after she had left the room."

Her grandfather laughed. "But seriously, my child," he said presently, "this question of dinner is no joke. I think we'd better take any sort of pick-up lunch and go out somewhere to dinner."

"But, Grad dear, everything is in the house for dinner, and, honestly, I want to try. I won't promise that it will be perfect, but I'll try to make it eatable. All I ask is that you won't bring any one home to dinner. We'll have it in the middle of the day as we always do on Sundays. If you will impress upon Gradda that she isn't to appear till dinner time, I think I can manage. You go off to church and I'll hold the fort."

"But ——"

"Please, no buts."

"I am afraid it will be a great task for you."

"Not a bit of it. I shall never learn younger, and ever and ever so many girls no older than I have done it and keep on doing it. Really you don't appreciate what a wonderful chance it is for me. Now, James, we're not getting on hat hall. Just go hup hand fetch down the Madam's dishes then make yourself tidy for church."

"But ——"

"Don't hanswer back, James; hit hisn't respectful. Go, do has I tell you." And the doctor went off meekly and without another word.

When he reached the stairs he began to chuckle. "The little scamp!" he murmured, "if she didn't fairly override me. She's just like her father; such spirit."

It was a busy morning for Joanne. She looked into the refrigerator to take account of stock. There was lamb to be roasted, lettuce to be prepared for salad with tomatoes. The dessert was made, fortunately, and was on the ice. In the pantry she found potatoes and other vegetables. She surveyed these thoughtfully, coming to the conclusion that baked sweet potatoes and lima beans would be the best selection for that day. There was canned soup which would lighten her labors. Then she set to work. First she pored over the cook-book to find out how long it would take to cook the various articles, then she prepared her vegetables, and, once all were set going, she went to the dining-room and made ready the table.

Not once did she go up-stairs for fear of disturbing her grandmother and of undergoing a cross-examination. She was on her knees before the stove, basting the meat, when she heard a startled exclamation and, looking up, saw her grandmother standing in the doorway, an expression of surprise and almost of horror on her face.

"My child," she cried, "what are you doing?"

Joanne shut the oven door and rose to her feet. "Cooking dinner," she replied smoothly.

"Cooking dinner? What do you mean? Where is Maria?"

"I haven't the faintest idea. She and Hester have gone bag and baggage; at least they have left no visible possessions here; so I suppose they have gone for good."

Mrs. Selden sank into a chair and raised her hands in dismay. "What are we coming to? Here it is Sunday and no way to get help. What are we to do?"

"Eat the dinner when it's cooked and wash up the dishes afterward," returned Joanne in a cheerful voice.

"Oh, but you poor child, you couldn't possibly do everything."

"Why not? It won't be the first time. Now, go into the other room, like a dear, good lady, and don't fuss. Grad will be here directly and he can help me take in the things. Don't look so woebegone, Gradda darling; I am getting along beautifully."

Mrs. Selden drew a long sigh, but made the move to leave Joanne to her own devices. At the door, however, she looked back reproachfully to say, "And you didn't go to church."

"Couldn't very well. I'm sorry, but works of necessity and mercy detained me."

"Why didn't you call me early? I could have

helped you. I am not much of a cook, I admit, but I could have done other things."

"Just what I wanted to avoid. You needed all the rest you could get. Cl'ar de kitchen! Cl'ar de kitchen. Shoo! Shoo!"

Mrs. Selden went out, and pretty soon her husband's latch-key was in the door. He went straight to the kitchen. "Well, Pickings," he said, "how goes it?"

"Fine," returned Joanne. "No slim pickings to-day, Grad."

"What can I do?"

"You might fill the glasses, and then help me take in dinner; it's all ready. Be careful, James, when you fill the glasses not to spill the water on the clean table-cloth."

"Your grandmother down?"

"Yes, and she almost wept when she saw me playing cook."

In a few minutes dinner was on the table and Joanne, flushed and triumphant, took her place. The meal was not served in the usual orderly manner. There were frequent jumpings up to change plates or to bring in something forgotten, all of which annoyed Mrs. Selden, a great stickler for the proprieties, but neither Dr. Selden nor Joanne minded, and the little cook received all the praise due her. Even Mrs. Selden, though she spoke with caution, was pleased to remark: "I have had many cooks who professed to be expert but who did no better." This was not an en-

thusiastic comment upon Joanne's skill, but it was quite as much as could be expected from such a particular body.

Supper was a more jovial meal, for the Pattison cousins happened in, and Cousin Sue turned to and helped, then Cousin Ned insisted upon joining the kitchen workers and was so jolly and funny that Dr. Selden came out to see what made them all so merry. He declared that his nephew was trying to usurp his place as butler, and would have it that he could be only footman. They carried on such an absurd dispute that the cook and her assistant came near to spoiling the dish they were preparing because of laughing so much.

"They are just two grown-up boys," declared Mrs. Pattison when the two men had marched out solemnly, each bearing a dish. "I never knew Uncle Greg could be so funny. I used to be just a little wee bit afraid of him."

"He can be awfully good fun," returned Joanne, "but he can be very dignified and stern, too. Now that he has come home for good, we are the greatest chums. I used to be not exactly afraid of him, but I minded his lectures more than Gradda's."

It was a tired Joanne who went to bed that Sunday night, but she had a great sense of well-being. For the first time in her life she had taken up real responsibilities, had performed tasks which meant the comfort and welfare of those she best loved. Heretofore they

had done things for her; now she was doing these things for them. The petulant, self-centred, spoiled child was left far behind; she was catching up with the ideal woman whose shining robes she could dimly discern on the road ahead.

The next day was such a busy one that she almost forgot that school was beginning. Mrs. Selden had worried herself into a sick headache, though it required the united persuasions of Joanne and her grandfather to keep the poor woman in bed.

"How will you get along, you poor child?" she moaned when Joanne appeared for her breakfast dishes.

"I can get along perfectly well," returned Joanne firmly.

"But all the things to be done; the ice to take in, the milk to see to, the orders to give, the door-bell to answer, not to mention the cooking."

"Now listen, Gradda dear," replied Joanne. "I am perfectly capable of attending to such things as ice and milk; I'd be a poor stick if I couldn't. Grad will get his lunch down-town. He is going to hunt up a cook, and send an order to the laundry asking them to call for the wash."

"That's another thing," wailed Mrs. Selden. "You have never in your life sorted the clothes and made out the list."

"Then it's high time I began. I know the difference between a sheet and a pillow-case, I hope. As to

cooking, you know I can do all that is necessary, so far as that is concerned."

"And to-day your school begins," went on her grandmother with a new grievance.

"That's nothing. It will be several days before the classes are in good running order. Lots of the girls don't come back the first week. I am going to darken the room, and I want you to lie still and not worry. I'm not the baby I was a year ago, and I can perfectly well attend to everything. Shut your eyes and 'keep a pleasant thought in your mind,' as the photographers tell you." She leaned over and gave her grandmother's cheek a light kiss. "If you want anything, just ring the bell."

She went off leaving her patient with a new feeling of reliance upon the girl expanding into a capable woman. It was an unwonted experience to listen to the authoritative voice speaking in such assured accents. Joanne was right; a year ago if any one had thrust such responsibilities upon her she would have been bewildered, probably rebellious, impatient, or weepingly, whiningly protesting. "She is going to be a great comfort, after all," sighed Mrs. Selden as she closed her eyes.

Joanne tackled the day's duties with the same determined energy she had shown the day before. She carried up a dish of milk toast and a cup of tea for her grandmother's lunch; made her own meal from leavings which she found in the refrigerator, and then sat

down for a while. Presently the door-bell rang. She opened the door to see Winnie Merryman standing on the step.

"You old fraud," exclaimed Winnie, "why weren't you at school to-day? I thought you were crazy to be one of the first in the field."

"Cease your recriminations," replied Joanne. "Come in and I'll tell you the why and wherefore."

"I thought maybe you were ill," continued Winnie as she followed Joanne into the library.

"No, I'm not, but Gradda is; at least she has worried herself into a sick headache. She did too much last week, and now both the maids have taken French leave, so here's where I cook."

"You don't mean it!"

"Sure pop. Sit thee down and let me pour out the tale of my woes into your sympathetic ear."

Winnie listened attentively to Joanne's recital; at its close she broke out with "Jo, I think you're a brick!"

"Brick your own self. You would do just the same. You see I can't very well help myself. The worst part is trying to manage poor dear Gradda. She is overcome with horror at poor little baby Jo trying to act like a responsible being. I've always been a sort of vine, you see, at least I have had to play vine whether I wanted to or not, and now that I can stiffen up without twining she can't understand it. She isn't used to these emergencies, anyway. Life has gone on rather placidly for her. When she has kept house she could

always get servants without difficulty. Now when those good old days are past and they are hard to get she is all adrift without sail or compass, and is all used up. Grad has gone out on the war-path, and I am hoping for a good report."

"Suppose he can't get any one."

"I shall keep up the good fight, of course. Now tell me about school."

"Oh, well, there wasn't much doing, and won't be till the schedules are made out."

"All the girls back?"

"Some are not, but there are several new ones. I haven't sized them up yet. Clausie and Ess were on hand, but Betty and Virgie won't be here till next week."

"Then I shall not be the last leaf upon the tree. Tell me, Win, what is the best way to fix up cold lamb? You see where my thoughts are. We had roast lamb hot for dinner yesterday and cold for supper. It gets sort of monotonous that way, besides I am anxious to try my powers."

"Well, let me see. I think the nicest way is to slice it, put it in a baking dish with a little onion, salt and pepper, then put in some tomatoes and green peppers, if you have them, and bake all together."

"Sounds toothsome, but I'm sort of scared of peppers; I don't know a thing about them, but I know Grad loves them, and I'm sure he would be charmed with such a dish."

"How would you like me to stay and superintend the job?"

"Oh, Win, would you?"

"Delighted. I can 'phone mother that I won't be back to dinner."

"You dear thing! Not only shall I be more than happy to have your company, but I shall be most grateful for your suggestions."

"We can do things together and it won't seem half the work."

"It will seem anything but work. To tell you the truth I was getting a little bit lonely with not a soul to speak to. I hope Gradda will be able to come down to dinner, but she mustn't if Grad says not."

"What are you going to have for dinner besides the lamb?"

"Some sort of soup; there is a whole row of canned kinds in the pantry. For vegetables I thought of potatoes and baked tomatoes; for dessert I thought I'd have sliced peaches and cream."

"I call that a good dinner, but, my child, why have the baked tomatoes if you have them in with the meat?"

"Sure enough. I forgot that I have some corn which is the easiest thing in the world to cook and will go well with the rest."

"I hope you have enough for me," returned Winnie laughing, "for I adore corn."

"Oh, there'll be enough."

"Then I'll get mother on the 'phone, and we'll call it settled."

The two girls were in the midst of their preparations for dinner when Dr. Selden came in. "What luck?" sang out Joanne.

He came into the kitchen. Winnie, paring peaches, nodded to him. "I can't shake hands," she said; "I'm reeking with juice."

"Why didn't you tell me that you had already engaged a cook?" said the doctor smiling at Joanne.

"Oh, this one is only day's work kind," retorted Joanne. "Did you find anybody, Grad? Do relieve my anxiety."

"I found two; one who can come right away; the other not till the latter part of the week. Under any other circumstances it would be better to wait for the second, for she is highly recommended, and is just the kind your grandmother would like. I thought I'd better consult her before we decided."

"What's the matter with the other one?"

"She is not so well recommended and I was not very favorably impressed. I fancy she is the kind who would follow the example of our late lamented Maria and would leave without ceremony if she felt like it."

"Then don't let's have her. I'd much rather stick it out to the end of the week and then take the good one. Don't you say so, Win?"

"That would be my way of doing," returned Win-

nie, going to the sink to rid her fingers of the juice upon them. "I tell you what, Jo, one of us can come and help you out with the dinner and the dishes; I'd love to, and when I can't come Clausie can or Ess, or some of us. We'd simply adore to do it."

"But, Miss Winnie," began the doctor.

"Now, doctor, please don't say a word," begged Winnie. "We are Girl Scouts, you know, and if we can't help out in case of need we aren't worth the powder to blow us up."

"Besides," put in Joanne eagerly, "it is going to be a corking experience for me. Win, you are a perfect love to want to help out."

"But what will your grandmother say?" asked the doctor.

"What can she say? All you need tell her is that you have engaged a cook to come—what day did you say?"

"Thursday, I believe. I have her telephone number and am to call her up as soon as the question is decided."

"Then we'll call it decided," replied Joanne, "and you can go right now and call her up, then that will all be settled."

Dr. Selden hesitated a moment, then he went off to the telephone.

"There is not a bit of sense in getting in an incompetent woman who would be more bother than she was worth," declared Joanne when her grandfather re-

turned. "What are a few days more or less if you get the right one in the end? What about a housemaid, Grad?"

"The woman I have just engaged knows of one we can get."

"So much the more should we wait, then. Don't you think so?"

"I think you are growing a wise old head on very young shoulders."

Joanne laughed and her grandfather went on upstairs leaving the girls to scurry around and make ready to serve the dinner.

CHAPTER XV

A GARDEN PARTY

ALL was serene in the house of Selden by the end of another week. The new maids proved to be more than ordinarily acceptable, Mrs. Selden was herself again and Joanne was hard at work in school. The first rally of Sunflower Troop found an enthusiastic set of girls ready for any undertaking which might be suggested.

"We've had such a wonderful summer," said Winnie, "that we should do something wonderful this winter. I'm ready for anything myself."

"Same here," said Betty Streeter. "What can we do, Miss Dodge?"

Miss Dodge thoughtfully tapped the table before her with a pencil. "There are so many calls these days," she answered at last. "The trouble is to select the most needy cause. For instance I have just had a letter from a friend in France who tells of the need of funds for carrying on an enterprise in which she is deeply interested. You know in some of those war-

torn districts the people are still without any other shelter than such as they can make themselves of rocks and the remnants of the houses which were shelled. These places must be something like caves, I imagine, but the people are content to live there, for it means some sort of home, and they cling to the village, devastated as it is. They have not much food, but the children receive a cup of chocolate or cocoa with a biscuit every day. My friend writes that the fund for this food must be kept up by contributions. In many cases this little lunch is the best meal the children get in the twenty-four hours, so you see there is a very worthy cause, for failing of contributions this work must be stopped. Then, of course, there are objects nearer home, the Tuberculosis League, mission schools in mountain districts, Christmas gifts for the poor, and so on ad infinitum."

She paused and looked around at the thoughtful young faces. Every girl seemed to be thinking deeply. "Well, Winnie," she said presently, "you look as if you had an idea."

"Just the beginnings of one. I was wondering if we couldn't get up some sort of thing like a garden party; it is still quite warm, you know. We could have tea and cakes and every cup of tea we sold would buy a cup of chocolate for those children, wouldn't it? How much does it cost over there?"

"About six cents, I believe."

"Then it would more than cover the price."

"We might have some sort of entertainment besides just a garden party," spoke up Claudia; "we could have theatricals or a dance, then we could divide up the profits and give to two or three things."

"That's an idea," agreed Miss Dodge.

"But where could we give it?" inquired Esther.

"Why not at our place?" said Claudia. "I think it is big enough and I'm sure Mother and Dad would be delighted."

"We'll have to start right in to make our plans if we are to do all that," said Winnie.

There was more talk, several new suggestions, and finally the troop separated full of the scheme.

But from the modest idea of a small garden party the plan grew till it embraced much more. This came about because some of the Boy Scouts got wind of it, and proposed to join forces.

Joanne and Winnie were working over their lessons one afternoon when Chet Lacey and Hal Fosdick came up on the porch where they were sitting. "Hallo, Jo," said Chet. "We've been looking for you."

Joanne laid down her French grammar. "For me? Why am I in request?"

The boys established themselves on the railing of the porch. "Well, you see, 'great oaks from little acorns grow,'" said Chet. "Aunt Nan was telling me about your garden party, and as we boys have been thinking of getting up some sort of a show, we might combine forces and have a big affair. I talked it over

with the other boys and they are keen for it, then I saw Miss Dodge and she also fell for it. Next came Claudia followed by Price mére and Price pére who most sweetly came into line. Now you are next on the list."

"But why me?" Joanne was puzzled.

"Well, you see we have had a sneaking idea that we wanted to have a sort of Wild West show, but there didn't seem to be any good place available. Now the Price place would be fine. We thought of it, but it seemed cheeky to ask for it until this garden party scheme came up and Hal says, says he, 'What's the matter with chipping in with the girls and having a combination show?' Result as aforesaid mentioned."

"Do you mean we are to take part in a Wild West show?" inquired Winnie eagerly.

"Some of you, maybe, but that's not the point I'm coming to. Speak up, Hal; my courage has all oozed out."

"Well—ahem!" Hal began and then paused to look helplessly at Chet.

"It must be something perfectly desperate," said Joanne; "you both of you look scared to death. Out with it."

"We want you to lend us Chico," blurted out Hal. Then he took a back somersault over the rail and out upon the grass plat, covering his face with his hands as he stood with his back to the others, while Chet sat anxiously scanning Joanne's face.

She hesitated but for a moment, then she said: "You can have him so far as I'm concerned, but I shall have to ask Grad and Cousin Ned."

"That's all right," said Chet cheerfully. "What you say goes, and I know they'll consent. Come back, Hal, the ordeal is over."

"How should you like to borrow Pablo, too?" asked Joanne. "You know what splendid stunts he can do, and I can ask Cousin Ned about him when I am asking about Chico."

"Oh, lady!" cried Chet falling on his knees and kissing Joanne's hand. "You are the daughter of a prophet!"

"Of course we can't be sure," said Joanne drawing away her hand with dignity. "How silly you are, Chet. Pablo may refuse to come even if he has Cousin Ned's consent."

"He'll come," replied Chet with conviction. "He would go through fire and water for you. He'll be the star performer, I can tell you that. We might get him to dance, too. How's that, Hal?"

"Fine. This thing is getting to be a regular corker of a show."

"Wouldn't it be funny to have Unc' Aaron, too?" said Joanne warmed up to greater enthusiasm.

"Oh, boy!" Hal took another back somersault. "I say, folkses, we'll be the talk of the town if we keep on."

"What I want to know is where do we come in?"

said Winnie. "We were the originators of the plan and we don't mean you shall have all the glory."

"Calm yourself, dear lady," said Chet, stroking Winnie's hand. "You shall do anything you please; ride bareback, be a wild Indian, or Buffalo Bill himself, if you want to."

"Silly!" exclaimed Winnie contemptuously. "You tell, Hal. What do you expect us to do?"

"Well," began Hal, "there will have to be pioneer women, of course; the Indians will try to capture them and drag them around by the hair."

"What a delightful part to take," said Winnie. "Aren't you crazy to be dragged around by the hair, Jo?"

Joanne laughed. "It doesn't appeal to me particularly."

"Oh, well," continued Hal, "I didn't mean that exactly. We haven't decided upon the programme entirely. Mr. T. and some of the other boys are working at it. Pete is writing a new song for the occasion. We thought we'd have music between the acts. But, really, girls, we haven't the whole thing arranged, we couldn't till we knew about Chico. When do you think you can tell us for sure, Jo?"

"To-morrow at the latest. If I can have a talk with Cousin Ned this evening and get it settled I'll call you up."

"Good! Come on, Hal. We've had a charming time, ladies." And the two started off.

"Don't count too much upon Pablo," called Joanne after them.

Chet wagged a hand as if in derision and went on.

The boys did not let the grass grow under their feet, neither did the girls for that matter. They were anxious that the entertainment should take place before the leaves should fall, for they wanted the brilliant setting of the fine old oaks, upon the Price place, whose scarlet foliage made a gorgeous background. While the girls were busy baking cakes and making sandwiches the boys were arranging seats for the audience. The Wild West show was to come first, and would begin at two o'clock. It would be followed by the tea, the whole thing to end up with a dance.

The boys had ransacked the town for some sort of vehicle approaching a prairie schooner in appearance, and had managed to hire an old Conestoga wagon. The hunt for a stage-coach was less successful, but finally an antiquated omnibus was made to do. It was a ramshackle affair, and might collapse if overloaded, but the boys viewed it with great pride. They had also hired two horses, had borrowed a cow and a crate of chickens. Dogs were easily available, so at last the outfit was complete.

Of course two o'clock came before they were ready. Such scurrying around as there was! such mad rushings back and forth from house to grounds! Pablo and Chico had arrived upon the scene the day before and had been put through their paces. Hal Fosdick

had taken them in tow and promised that they would show up at the proper time.

It was nearing two o'clock. The girls had finished the last of the sandwiches, had stacked them up and covered them with damp napkins, had arranged the plates of cakes and had set the teacups in order.

"There!" exclaimed Claudia, "that's the last. You girls that are in the show had better hurry off and get into your costumes. The rest of us will cut the lemons and see to anything else."

Off went Joanne, Betty Streeter, Minerva Lacey and Virgie Ambler. Joanne had stipulated that if they would drag her around by her apron strings instead of by the hair she would not be averse to taking part.

She had just donned calico frock, plaid shawl and sunbonnet when up rushed Hal in a state of wild excitement. "Seen anything of Pablo?" he panted.

Joanne paused in the act of tying her bonnet strings. "Why, no. I thought he was coming with you."

"Just what I thought. We started out together. Pablo was riding Chico. I told him to follow me. We were almost here when I looked around and not a sign of either Pablo or Chico. The show can't go on without them, and lots of people are already here. It's two o'clock." Hal clutched his hair wildly.

Joanne looked dumbfounded. "How perfectly awful!" she exclaimed. All sorts of fancies took possession of her. Suppose Pablo had suddenly taken it into his head to run away with Chico. Suppose a

motor car had run into him. Suppose! Suppose! "What in the world do you suppose has happened to them?" she said helplessly.

"Don't I wish I knew? It's like magic. I looked around and there they were. I looked around again and there they were not. I'm wild. I don't know what to do."

"Did you go back?"

"Of course. We were near a corner. I looked up and down both streets but they had vanished utterly."

"There was no crowd as if there had been an accident?"

"Nothing unusual."

"It is the most mysterious thing I ever knew," declared Joanne, joining Hal who was starting back toward the dressing tent. "It makes me fairly ill."

"It's enough to make any one ill. We'll have to start the thing in some way. It was to be so effective with Pablo dressed as an Indian and mounted on Chico. He was to look off over the prairies, you know the way it is done."

"I know —— Oh, Hal, Hal, look, look! There they are!" Joanne broke off her speech to point to three figures deliberately entering the grounds.

They set off on a run to meet Pablo leading Chico, and who but Unc' Aaron?

"Pablo! Pablo!" cried Joanne, "what has happened?"

"Nothing, señorita."

"But why are you late? Why did you not follow Hal?"

"It is this old one, señorita, this Unc' Aaron. I see him arriving. I dismount. He comes to me. We turn the cornder. He say 'I knows this place. I work here when boy! We will enter at back, is more shorter the way.' There comes at once a leetle—what is it you call him? A alleys. There comes a gate which we cannot enter for is lock, so then we must go around. Now we are here."

"That's enough!" cried Hal. "Come along, Pablo. Hurry!"

Pablo sprang agilely upon Chico and dashed off in the direction Hal started. Joanne gave a great sigh of relief as she turned to Unc' Aaron. "This certainly is a surprise," she said. "I was so afraid something awful had happened. You shouldn't have taken Pablo out of the way, Unc' Aaron."

"Lawsy, little lady, I ain't tucken him outen de way," protested Unc' Aaron. "I knows dis ole place lak a book. When Mr. Ned tells me whar is de show, I says: Um-um, reckons I'll go and see de ole place once mo'. Dey won't deny de ole man adsmission ef so be I comes wid one o' de reformers. I a leetle teensy bit late an' I sholy were glad when I sees de boy ahaid. I ketches up wid him, and dat's de way it are."

Joanne walked on by a side path to the back of the scene that she might be on hand when required. She

felt annoyed with Unc' Aaron for causing the delay, but the old man was so unsuspecting, and so pleased to be there, that she could not keep up her resentment, and told him to find himself a place where he could see, then went on and disappeared behind the row of army blankets stretched across to serve as curtains.

But Unc' Aaron had no idea of being a mere spectator. He followed her all the way, and presented himself before the excited company with: "'Scuse me, ladies and gemmans, wharin kin I be of resistance?"

"Here, get Chico into these contraptions as quick as you can," cried Hal, tossing him some gay trappings, and Unc' Aaron fell to work with all the dexterity possible.

After this he was here, there, everywhere, waiting on the girls, helping the boys, taking charge of Chico when he was not needed, harnessing the horses to the wagon, strapping the crate of chickens in the right place under the wagon, and altogether expediting matters so much that long before the performance was over every one forgot his part in causing Pablo's tardy appearance and thought only of his helpfulness.

It was a great show, and if the principal features lacked something of the exactness shown by Buffalo Bill, it was none the less enjoyed by both spectators and performers. Indeed, it is probably true that the very makeshifts added greater amusement. The girls wouldn't have been girls if they hadn't enjoyed shrieking when the band of Indians came down upon them

interrupting the peaceful supper scene. Joanne wasn't dragged very far by her apron strings because of the fact that the strings gave way and she found herself sprawling on the ground. She wasn't very successful in turning her laughter back into shrieks, but she did her best, and was rescued in a state of convulsive mirth which might very well be considered sobs of joyful relief.

The stage-coach didn't break down entirely, but it creaked so under the strain, that but for the popping of pistols one might have feared the passengers would suffer greater damage from a collapse of the vehicle than from the bandits. That the boys revelled in this part of the show goes without the saying, though perhaps those of them who had also belonged to the band of Indians were quite as happy in such character.

But probably none of the performers won more applause than Chico who acquitted himself with great distinction. Pablo, too, received an ovation for his feats in riding, greatly to Unc' Aaron's delight. The old man was utterly oblivious of the fact that he formed a part of the company of spectators. He kept edging further and further around toward the front and finally stood in full view uttering such exclamations as: "Go it, child! Das right, li'l' hoss, prick up dem yeahs. Mekin' pertend he buckin', ain't it de troof? Keep yo'. seat, honey! Keep yo' seat! Looky dar! ain' dat purty, de way dat chile pick up de hankercher when hoss a-goin' lickerty split?"

But when at last Pablo galloped off the stage, the old man came to a realizing sense of being in the face and eyes of every one, and that he was as much a cause of amusement as any one else had been. Then he lifted his hands and rolled his eyes heavenward as he beat a hasty retreat. "I done los' mah haid," he snickered, as he appeared behind the scenes. "I so wrop up in watchin' dat boy I clean fergit mahse'f. I hopes yuh-alls escuse me."

This being no time to talk of excuses no one paid any attention to the speech, and Unc' Aaron was set to work.

Later on when the singing and dancing was a part of the programme some one in front called out: "Unc' Aaron! Unc' Aaron! Give us a dance from Unc' Aaron!" But no amount of persuasion could induce the old man to come out. He still regretted what he considered a loss of dignity in showing off his powers on a former occasion, and was not going to place himself in a position to be chaffed by "Mistah Ned." If he had but known it, Mister Ned was the very one who gave the call.

At last the show was over, then khaki colored figures were seen rushing around with cups of tea and plates of cakes. Here, too, Unc' Aaron made himself useful. He was in his element and really added much to the event. In his queer costume he was the observed of all observers. "Who is the dear old-fashioned darkey?" was the question continually asked.

And so did Uncle Aaron do his part in making a goodly sum for the hungry children overseas.

By six o'clock the tea drinkers had departed, and the girls hurried home to dress for the dance. It was to be an early affair since it was Saturday night, and was to begin at eight o'clock. Joanne had brought her dress with her. It was of pale yellow organdy and was vastly becoming, the girls told her.

"I just love you in that dress," said Winnie turning her around. "Your grandmother knows what is becoming to you."

"Yes," said Joanne a little doubtfully, "but sometimes she likes my things a little fussy and I like them plain."

"It's just the opposite with me," said Claudia; "mother likes my things plain and I like them a little fussy to hide my bones, but mother is most punctilious about it."

"You mean pink-tulleous," retorted Winnie with a laugh and a little touch upon Claudia's diaphanous gown.

"Oh, Win, that's dreadful," exclaimed Claudia.

"I thought it was rather good, myself," responded Winnie airily. "Is it you or your mother who is responsible for this get up?"

"Well, we made a compromise," answered Claudia. "I wanted a few more ruffles and mother wanted a few less, so we split the difference, though I hope I shall not split the underskirt, which is a bit skimp."

"It certainly is pretty," commented Joanne. "You look like a rose in it, Clausie, a pink rose."

"And you look like a yellow one. No, I should say more like a pansy with your dark hair and eyes. As for Win, in that white frock and with those pink cheeks she is just like an apple-blossom. Come on, let's go down; I hear guests arriving."

"I'm glad we took an hour's rest," said Joanne as they descended the stairs, "for now I feel as fresh as possible, and I really felt all in when the last cup of tea was served."

"What a blessing dear old Unc' Aaron has been," said Claudia. "He washed up all the cups and things, and now he is on hand to do anything we want him to."

They entered the prettily decorated drawing-room and soon the dance was in full swing. The boys had exchanged their khaki for evening dress, the girls flitted about in daintily hued costumes. There were flowers everywhere and ruddy autumn leaves. The music by a volunteer band was slightly jazzy but no one cared as long as it served for dancing. The room was so full that many couples betook themselves to the hall, for not only the younger set, but older persons were there. Mr. Pattison saw to it that there were no wall flowers, and Mrs. Pattison was in great request.

Dr. and Mrs. Selden arrived late, looked around for Joanne and finally caught sight of her graceful little

figure dancing with Mr. Travis. She shot them a happy smile as she whisked by. Presently the music stopped, then it struck up the old time melody of "Turkey in the Straw."

"All take your partners for the Virginia Reel," called out Mr. Price. "Everybody join."

Joanne slid across the floor to her grandfather. "Come, Grad, come," she cried seizing him by the arm.

"Pshaw! an old fellow like me? Go find some younger partner."

"No, you, you, I want you. A navy man not dance? It's absurd. Of course you will; Gradda must, too."

"Please to count me out," expostulated Mrs. Selden. But here Mr. Pattison came up to join his entreaties to Joanne's, so off the four went, Joanne as proud as Lucifer of her grandparents.

This was the last dance. The clock was nearing the hour of midnight. There was a rush for the cloak room. Automobiles honked outside. The tang of fallen leaves filled the air as the door opened. Good-night, and good-night and good-night. It was all over.

"Had a good time, little girl?" asked Cousin Ned who was taking the party home in his car.

"I never had such a good time in all my life," responded Joanne with a happy sigh.

"I've had a pretty good time myself," returned her cousin, as they passed out into the broad street.

CHAPTER XVI

CHRISTMAS WREATHS

THE autumn days sped quickly by. There was plenty to do both in school and out, so Joanne had no time for moping. She had her ups and downs, of course, and once in a while flew into one of her old rages, but each time she was more ashamed, and was beginning to see that the game was not worth the candle. Her girl friends did much in helping her to see this; Winnie, particularly, gave her no sympathy when she came to her with an imagined grievance.

"What's the use of getting all worked up over a little thing like that?" she would ask. "Suppose you can't always have your own way. Isn't it just as important that your grandmother should have hers? Don't be so stuck on yourself, Joanne Selden." After which blunt speech Joanne would feel, first furious, then penitent, and all would go along smoothly till the next outbreak which would be less violent.

She flounced out of the room one day after a hot argument with her grandmother and on her way upstairs heard the latter say: "I wonder if that poor child will ever learn to control her temper."

"She is learning," Dr. Selden returned. "Rome wasn't built in a day, my dear, and if you will look back you will see that she has made vast improvement. I think we have every reason to believe that she will develop into a fine woman. A girl with her spirit isn't going to disappoint us. She is making a good fight. Many a time I have seen her bite her lips to keep back some hot words. The thing to do is to trust her, and not reprove too much; that only makes her defiant. It was the same with her father, you remember. We must help her, not antagonize her."

Joanne went on to her room, murmuring: "Dear Grad; he understands. I won't disappoint him. I will not." She went to the clothes press and took down a hat box from which she drew her new winter hat. She tried it on, and looked at it from all sides. Then she took it off and stood with it poised upon her hand. Finally she put it back into the box, replaced the lid with a determined air and shoved the box back upon its shelf. Taking down her last year's hat she settled it on her head with scarcely a glance in the mirror, and picking up her gloves she left the room.

The argument, be it said, was upon the subject of hats. Joanne had insisted upon wearing the new one; her grandmother had declared she must not, as the weather was unsettled, and she might spot the velvet of the hat. Joanne had said she would carry an umbrella, but this did not satisfy Mrs. Selden, who declared it was not suitable to wear a new hat in the

rain. Then came the flouncing out of the room. Now Joanne reëntered wearing the old hat. She gave her grandmother a parting kiss but to her grandfather she gave an extra hug. She was off to a matinée with Winnie and Claudia and did want to show off the new hat which had come home only the evening before.

She found the girls waiting for her. She saw that both wore their last year's suits and hats and was glad she had taken her grandmother's advice.

"Clausie saw Miss Dodge to-day," began Winnie, "and she wants us to think up some way of earning Christmas money for charity. It seems to me we exhausted our ingenuity upon the garden party; for my part I haven't an idea left in my head. Claus thinks each one might do some special thing to earn money, but as for team work I don't see what is left to do. How's your brain working, Jo? Anything to suggest?"

"Not when you spring it on me like that, but I'll try to start the old thing going and let you know later on."

"We've got to be up and doing," Clausie reminded her, "for Christmas is marching on apace."

"Don't I know it? There's no doubt but it's a great thing to be a Girl Scout, but it certainly does keep you hustling."

Interested as the girls were in the play, between acts they reverted to this conversation, but were no nearer a plan at the close than they were in the beginning.

"Maybe some of the other girls will have a brilliant idea to suggest," said Clausie as they parted, "but keep on your thinking cap just the same, Jo."

Joanne promised and went on home through the rain which was now falling steadily. In spite of it she found that the Pattisons had come to dinner, as it was their habit to do once a week at least, and this generally on Saturday.

They were all sitting around talking seriously when Joanne came in. "It was a lovely show," she said as she drew off her gloves and cuddled up to Mrs. Pattison on the sofa. "Why do you all look so grave?"

"We were talking of conditions in Europe, of the poor starving children there. It seems as if we should make every sacrifice to help them."

Joanne drew a long sigh, and sat with downcast eyes and thoughtful expression. "I suppose every little helps," she said, presently. "I was going to invite Winnie and Clausie to go to a matinée next Saturday, but I can give that up so I can send the money it would cost for tickets. The girls won't mind when I explain. I wish I knew some way we could earn money. Miss Dodge wants us to think up some plan."

Mrs. Pattison drew Joanne closer, and dropped a light kiss on her head. "You are a dear," she whispered. "I saw Miss Dodge to-day, and I imagine she has this very object in view, for she spoke of it."

"Can't any of you think of some way we girls could earn money?" Joanne appealed to the others.

"I suppose you might make fancy articles," remarked her grandmother. "No doubt you could find a sale for them now that Christmas is at hand."

"Yes, but that takes so long, and we want something we can do in a hurry," Joanne objected.

"You might go around and take orders for soap or something, like the little girl in your favorite book," Dr. Selden suggested.

"Oh, yes, 'Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm.' I could do that, but I don't know who would like me to sell anything, and Christmas would be here before I found out."

"We don't seem very happy in our suggestions," said Mrs. Selden; "I am afraid we can't help you out."

Joanne sighed again and looked around upon the group; her grandmother gray haired, a little pucker between the eyes, stout, neat and carefully dressed; her grandfather tall, spare, a trifle bald, keen-eyed; her Cousin Ned, a thoughtful look upon his handsome face, her Cousin Sue smiling down at her. Among them all must be developed some plan.

Presently her Cousin Ned gave his knee a slap. "I have it!" he cried. "Why not sell Christmas greens? You can go up and help yourselves from that piece of woods where the fire was. I'm thinking of clearing it up, anyway. There are some nice little pines and cedars in there and a lot of ground-pine. Shouldn't wonder if there were some holly, too. Yes, I am sure there is."

Joanne sprang to her feet. "You darling deliverer!" she cried as she dashed over to give him a hug. "Now tell me just how we are to get it," she went on perching herself on the arm of his chair.

"Can't some of your Boy Scout friends help you out? You could make up a party to go up there. You girls could gather the ground-pine and holly while the boys cut down the trees. Too bad the canal boats aren't running, for you could ship the stuff right down on them, but if you have more than the car or cars will hold, perhaps you can get Clover to bring it down in a wagon; he'll be coming down here, probably. You can tell him why you are getting it, and I'm sure he'll fall in with the plan. He's a very good-hearted fellow."

"Cousin Ned, I do think you are the most wonderful man," exclaimed Joanne leaning over to give her cousin's cheek a loving pat. "It is all so perfectly dear and sweet. In the first place it will be heavenly to go up there and get the greens, and it will be the greatest fun to make the wreaths, and we'll make more money than we could in any other way. Besides it will be team work, which is the nicest of all. I wonder where would be the best place to sell the greens."

"I'll be the first customer," spoke up Dr. Selden. "Count me in for all the wreaths and garlands we shall need."

"Oh, Grad, you dear!" Joanne left her perch to take a similar one by her grandfather and to give him

a little peck of a kiss on his cheek. "I want a tree, too."

"You? Aren't you too big for trees?"

"I don't mean a baby tree, just a cunning little one for the dinner table."

"All right; we'll have it."

"I'll hunt up some funny little presents to put on it, and we'll have them somewhere between turkey and plum pudding." Again she left her perch to settle down a second time by her Cousin Sue. "It's so adorable to think we'll have Christmas in our own home and that you and Cousin Ned will be with us," she said giving Mrs. Pattison's hand a squeeze.

Here dinner was announced, but Joanne could hardly wait till it was over before she went to the 'phone to tell her glad tidings to Winnie and Claudia, meeting, of course, a most enthusiastic approval. "We'll go up on Saturday," she concluded by saying. "Pray Heaven it will be a good day."

The boys were quite as ready as the girls for the trip, and set aside all anxiety when they said there would be no trouble in getting two automobiles. Mr. Fosdick would let Hal take his car, Jimmy Carey could get another.

"We must start early," Hal said, "and we'd better take along something to eat. If you girls could bring sandwiches we'll provide the rest."

Fortunately the weather continued mild, and Mrs. Selden, who at first was rather dubious about the trip,

at last saw no reason why Joanne should not go. So off they started in high feather. For some mysterious reason Chet Lacey and Pete Lowe did not join them.

"I don't see what struck those boys," said Hal as they started off.

"You know Pete said it would give a chance for more of the girls to go," remarked Miss Chesney.

"Yes, but Pete could have squeezed in somewhere," protested Hal. "He could have stood on the running board; we could have taken turns, for that matter."

However, the absence of two of their comrades did not spoil their pleasure. The roads were good and they made excellent time, so they arrived quite early enough. As they turned off from the main road, they decided to leave the automobiles, as it was not very safe further on, so out they all clambered to walk the rest of the way. They had gone but a few steps when they heard the tinkle of a guitar.

"I do believe Pablo is there to help us," cried Joanne. "Yes, I see Chico. That's fine. Now we shall have no trouble getting the trees out of the woods, for Chico can drag them."

Another turn disclosed not only Chico and Pablo, but Chet and Pete, Pete seated on a log and strumming away on his guitar, Chet swinging on a grape vine.

"You lobsters! How did you get here?" cried Hal dashing forward.

"Think nobody can run a car but yourself, don't you?" returned Chet.

"Car? What car?"

Chet pointed to a small runabout hidden from sight behind a clump of bushes, then he broke into derisive shouts of laughter at sight of Hal's expression of astonishment. "We got the drop on you that time," he cried. "This pays you up for that last trick you played on Pete and me."

"All right; it is the kind of paying up I like," returned Hal good-naturedly. "Come on, boys, where are the axes? Let's get to work."

"Where do we start?" asked Jimmy, shouldering his axe.

"I don't suppose it makes much difference," decided Hal. "Each fellow can pick out his own tree. Mr. Pattison said we could take whatever we wanted, didn't he, Jo?"

"He did indeed."

"He's what I call a true sport," said Chet. "He plays the game up to the limit. I don't believe he has a mean bone in his body." He gave a first stroke on the trunk of a small cedar, and soon the axes were busy.

The girls, after petting Chico and having a little chat with Pablo, went in search of the ground-pine.

"That Unc' Aaron he is show me where is best," announced Pablo. "I go make you see where is."

"Where is Unc' Aaron?" inquired Joanne.

"He come bimeby. At the present moment he have a work to do."

Piloted by Pablo the girls went on to discover the

pretty running wreaths of green, and to find several bushes of holly red with berries. The prickly leaves made the gathering of this last rather a trying job, but the girls had carried knives and wore thick gloves, so they managed very well.

It was not long before they heard a distant singing, a wild weird strain, and through the trees they saw the approaching figure of Unc' Aaron. At sight of the girls he stopped his camp-meeting tune and came up bowing and scraping. "Good-mawnin', ladies," he said. "Dis are an onexpected gratication, mos' lak a fessible, seein' yuh-alls in de midst of wintah. Mistah Clovah done tell me las' night he lookin' fo' yuh-alls ter come up fur to git crowfoot and all dat greeny stuff."

"Do you call this crowfoot?" inquired Joanne touching the pile at her feet.

"Das de entitlements it have about hyah," replied Unc' Aaron. "Is yuh-alls lak dis hyar missytoe?"

"Mistletoe? Oh, we love it, but we haven't seen any."

"Den yuh-alls hasn't sought in de right place. I knows whar it is. Yuh come along wid me, little lady, an' I shows yuh."

Joanne followed the old man through clumps of underbrush which he held aside that she might pass through, and in the depths of the woods he paused and pointed upward. There, clinging to a tall tree, was the bunch of mistletoe. Joanne looked up with clasped

hands and eyes full of wondering delight. "It really is," she said softly. "I never saw it growing before. Oh, Unc' Aaron, they all must see it before we take it down."

"I goes an' fetches dem," he offered.

"But how can we get at it?"

"Dat little Pabblyo, he climb a tree lak a monkey; he git it. Jes' yuh wait; he git it." Unc' Aaron had called Pablo so from the first, and nothing would ever make him change the pronunciation of the boy's name.

Joanne sat still upon an old stump, her eyes fixed upon the gray green parasite with its waxen berries. In a moment a flash of red showed her that a cardinal bird was wintering near by. She watched him flit from tree to tree, and presently saw the bright blue plumage of a jay whose impetuous dashing flight gave evidence that he knew the presence of a stranger. She heard his harsh cry farther off, and next was attracted by a pair of squirrels playfully chasing each other from branch to branch. She was still watching their antics when Winnie came up.

"The others will be along in a minute," she announced. "Mr. Clover is there with a big drag that they haul stones on, and the girls are loading it with the greens so they can be easily taken to the road and into the automobiles. All the trees are to be hauled to town in a wagon. Where is the mistletoe?"

Joanne pointed upward. "Isn't it a fine big bunch? There are so many interesting things to see in these

woods. I have been watching the squirrels and birds. Don't you wish you could be transformed into some little woodsy creature, an elf or a gnome or something? Then you could get so close to the forest life and get intimate with all the little people who live here."

Winnie laughed. "I think I prefer to be myself. I shouldn't like to be too intimate with some of the denizens of the forest; they might eat me up."

"Oh, I don't mean to be always an elf or fay, but just sometimes; when you felt like it. Here come the rest. Now we can see Pablo do his climbing stunt."

The girls and some of the boys came trooping up, and presently Pablo was nimbly climbing the tree, finally detaching the coveted mistletoe which he tossed down to the group below. It was deftly caught by one of the boys and was borne off in triumph to top the pile of holly and other greens ready to be taken back to town. There was not a girl or boy who did not demand a bit, and it was quite clear there would be few greens of any kind left to sell to any but the gatherers. The trees, to be sure, were less in demand, but these would be easily disposed of.

Noon found them still busy. An hour passed. Chet looked at his watch. "I don't know how the rest of you feel," he said, "but I think it's time we had some 'grub.' I could eat a dozen hot dogs this minute. You've heard the expression 'hungry as a wood chopper'; well, here is the living fact."

This was the signal for the boys to throw down their axes, for the girls to start the alcohol lamp over which to heat those same "hot dogs" and in a few minutes they were all eating ravenously sandwiches, crackers and cheese, the frankfurters, cakes and bananas, till not a crumb was left.

"If there is anything better than chopping down trees in winter to give one an absolutely insatiable appetite, lead me to it," said Chet.

"We haven't done any chopping," returned Joanne, "but I was never so hungry in my life."

"And look at the color you have," said Winnie. "You were the palest thing ever when I first saw you. There's nothing like scouting to set you up."

"Don't I know that?" replied Joanne brushing the crumbs from her lap.

"Time's up!" cried Hal jumping to his feet; "we've got to get busy if we are to finish up in time to reach home before dark."

"We can't do that," avowed Jimmy, "for we're on the shortest days. If we get home by dinner time we'll do."

"But we'll have to get started before dark; we don't want to stay in these woods after sundown," declared Miss Chesney.

"Go to it, boys," cried Hal, and again the axes were at work.

The company was loth to leave the spot; there was always some specially fine piece of crowfoot, a par-

ticularly full branch of holly which attracted the eye of somebody, and which must not be left.

Joanne had wandered off a little way tracing the trailing green of a last growth of crowfoot. "Come along, Jo?" cried Hal. "We're going."

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" she called back.

"Can't wait."

"But I've found something."

Hal ran over to where she stood bending over some object upon the ground. "What is it?" he asked as he came up. "More crowfoot?"

"Not crowfoot, but crowfeet," answered Joanne. "The feet belong to a poor little crow that has been hurt, in a trap, I suppose. He is rather hostile, but I'm trying to get him into a better frame of mind. I'm going to take him home; he will make a darling of a pet."

"Perhaps he will and perhaps he will not," returned Hal. "Let's see him."

Joanne moved away from the little barrier she had made around the object of her concern and Hal picked up the bird, which cocked a suspicious eye at him, but did not struggle much. "It is clear that his leg is broken," declared Hal. "If we had some kind of bandage I could put a little splint on it and it would be all right till your grandfather sees it."

Joanne drew forth a handkerchief and began tearing it into strips. "Who wouldn't sacrifice an old handkerchief to such a cause?" she said.

"Cause? What cause?"

"The crow's caws, of course," returned Joanne. They both laughed and while Joanne held the bird, laid on its back, in a hollow between her knees, Hal deftly bandaged the broken leg. There were several expostulatory, throaty caws, and a few savage pecks at Joanne, but she managed to hold the patient firmly and the work was soon accomplished.

It was only just finished when Pete and Jimmy came up. "What in the name of common sense is keeping you two?" they asked.

"First Aid," returned Hal. "We have a patient."

"Let's see."

Joanne held up the crow.

"Well, I vow!" exclaimed Pete. "What you going to do with him?"

"Take him home."

"What do you want with an old crow?" asked Jimmy.

"I'll make a pet of him, and he can be our mascot. I wish I had a basket or something to put him in."

"What's the matter with the basket we have the Scraggses presents in?" said Hal. "We've got to stop there and deliver them and needn't leave the basket."

"Just the thing," agreed Joanne.

Of course every one clamored to know what had detained them so long, but admitted that they were justified, and finally they started off, the automobiles

piled high with greens so that the occupants were almost hidden, and there was scarcely room for the basket Mrs. Clover insisted they should take along.

"Just some pork stuff I'm sending to Mrs. Pattison and Mrs. Selden for Christmas," she confided to Joanne. "We killed a hawg the other day and the sausage is prime if I do say it."

There was a short stop at the Scraggses. Mrs. Scraggs, blowsy as ever, came to the door with Claude Lafayette in her arms, the other children crowding around, eager-eyed as the Christmas parcels were handed out. Then they were off again, tired but happy.

CHAPTER XVII

JIM CROW

"WHAT in the world have you there?" inquired Mrs. Selden as Joanne set down the basket containing her patient.

"Jim Crow," responded Joanne.

"You do say such silly things, Joanne," returned her grandmother. "I suppose that is some of the slang you have picked up from those boys, like calling frankfurter sausages 'hot dog.' I wish you wouldn't use those unpleasant expressions, and I wish you would answer my questions seriously."

"Well, if it isn't Jim Crow it is a crow," replied Joanne.

"Of all things."

"He has a broken leg, and I couldn't leave him in the woods for some savage creature to get, so I brought him home so Grad could see his leg is properly set."

"That is another thing. Of course you couldn't let any creature suffer."

"Where is Grad?"

"In the library. I have been worried to death about you. What made you so late?"

"The crow," Joanne answered picking up the basket and walking out of the room. Why was it her grandmother so often rubbed her the wrong way? She had come home feeling happy and amiable and now was all ruffled up. Well, Claudia had advised her not to be snappish, but to cultivate a sweet serenity, for her grandmother couldn't help not having a keen sense of humor, and there was no way to mend matters, except by controlling one's temper. "It isn't possible for your grandmother to see things as you do, but it is possible for you not to get mad about it," Claudia had told her.

"Well, well, well," her grandfather greeted her. "Back again safe and sound. Have a good time?"

"We had a perfectly scrumptious time, and almost all our greens are spoken for. What the families and friends of the girls and boys don't take the churches will, so we feel we have done a good day's work."

Here Jim Crow spoke up from his basket. "Caw, caw," he said protestingly.

"What have you got there?" inquired Dr. Selden curiously.

Joanne lifted the lid of the basket and produced the crow. "A patient for you. Hal fixed his leg the best he could but I want you to look at it and see if it is all right. We found him in the woods." She took the

bird over to her grandfather who examined it carefully, not, however, without some objection on the part of Jim Crow.

"Hal did a pretty good job," pronounced Dr. Selden, "but I'll put on some better splints and he'll come out all right, I think. What are you going to do with him?"

"Keep him. He will make such a funny pet."

Dr. Selden shook his head. "I don't think your grandmother will approve of such a pet. Crows are very mischievous, you know."

"But not more so than monkeys, and my father had a monkey, you told me."

"Yes, to be sure," Dr. Selden smiled reminiscently, "and many a prank he played."

"Tell me some."

"Well, I remember on one occasion when your grandmother was giving a dinner to some distinguished guests that the meal was delayed nearly an hour because Master Monkey got into the dining-room just before the meal was to be served. The butler had left the room for a moment and in the twinkling of an eye Toots, that was the monkey's name, had made havoc of the butler's careful preparations, flowers, nuts, candies overturned, water streaming over everything, glasses upset, the table in a perfect mess."

Joanne laughed. "What did poor Gradda do?"

"What did the poor butler do? He came to your grandmother and asked her what he should do. There

was but one thing to do and that was to lay the table again and delay the dinner. It was a mercy it wasn't utterly spoiled."

"And what happened to the monkey?"

"He was banished the next day, much to your father's sorrow, but this was the climax of many trials, and your grandmother's endurance was at an end. I must say I was sorry, but when I came home from my next trip I brought a dog to your father and he was comforted, for he could keep the dog out-of-doors and could make a great companion of him."

"I wish I could remember my father," said Joanne wistfully.

"I wish you could, my dear," returned her grandfather gravely. "You are much like him."

"Temper and all?" asked Joanne with a little deprecating smile.

Her grandfather nodded, then answered. "He learned to control his temper just as you are trying to do."

"Oh, Grad, do you really notice that?"

"Of course; I am not blind."

"It's a great comfort to know that my father was just as fiery as I am, and that he did improve. Well, Grad, I suppose I must give up Jim Crow if Gradda says so, but I hope I can keep him till he gets well. Will you put in a good word for him?"

"I will, for I don't think he can do much damage with only one leg to stand on."

Mrs. Selden yielded gracefully when the question was put before her. She was too kind-hearted to do otherwise and really showed great interest in the wounded bird. As for Joanne, her trials began that very first night when the crow insisted upon leaving the nest she had made for him in the basket, and hobbled about the room making strange noises, and getting hold of all manner of things, till, after being awakened many times, Joanne finally shut him up in her bathroom. She discovered him the next morning in the act of carrying off a teaspoon which he had found on the wash-stand, to which place he had flown.

His broken leg soon mended, but before it was quite healed Joanne carried him to the gymnasium where the girls gathered to make up the greens into wreaths and garlands. Here he distinguished himself by picking the red berries from the holly, by flying off with the string, by trying to hide the scissors or any other bright object he spied, and though at first this was amusing at last it came to be rather a nuisance, for it interfered with the work.

"I don't believe we want him for a mascot," decided Miss Chesney. "There's no telling what trouble he'll make for us."

"But he's so funny and so tame," protested Winnie. "I love to see him hopping around."

"Then he mustn't come when he would interfere with any work we may want to do," Miss Chesney compromised.

"Is your grandmother going to let you keep him for good?" inquired Winnie turning to Joanne.

Joanne shook her head sadly. "I'm afraid not. He carried off her thimble the other day and we were hours finding it."

It was quite true that Mrs. Selden soon declared that she would have none of Jim Crow; he was far too mischievous to admit into the household, so back he went to his native heath where Pablo gladly took possession of him, clipped his wings and made a great pet of him, so the next time Joanne saw him he was riding around on Chico's back and hob-nobbing with the cats in the barn and the chickens in the barn-yard.

Christmas came and went bringing all sorts of excitement and pleasures to Joanne. One of her chief joys was in a letter she received from Mrs. Marriott with a photograph of herself in her home, Bob standing by her side with the quizzical look upon his face which Joanne knew so well. Joanne paraded the picture around rapturously, and acknowledged it in a letter distinguished not only for its enthusiasm but for its length. It brought a prompt reply just after New Year, giving Joanne something to look forward to, for Mrs. Marriott said she expected to be in Washington before the year was up, and that she hoped to see much of her little friend while she was there.

"She is so perfectly adorable," said Joanne after she had read the letter to Winnie. "I should like to carry her photograph around with me all the time,

only it is too big. I am going to devote some of my Christmas money to having it framed, and I shall hang it in my room where I can see it first thing when I wake up."

Winnie laughed. "You crazy thing, to go into such ecstasies over a mere woman."

"She isn't a mere woman; she is the queen of women."

"Crazy again. I don't see why you want to have so many pictures of her in your room. Let me see; there is one on the dressing bureau, one on the mantelpiece, one on that little table, and another on the wall, and I know perfectly well that you carry around one with you in your purse."

"But they are all snap shots, and this new one is so much larger and more important, besides the one in my pocketbook is nearly worn out and I shall have to replace it pretty soon. You needn't talk, for you have shoals of pictures of Marguerite Clark and Esther has just as many of Mary Pickford."

"But Marguerite Clark is a Girl Scout; she is captain of a troop."

"Well, so is Mrs. Marriott, at least she was; if it hadn't been for her I would never have become one, and I should never have met you, so no wonder I adore her."

"Oh, well, if you put it that way, of course," responded Winnie. "Let me have another look at the big photograph."

Joanne gladly produced it. "You can't say she isn't lovely," she remarked.

"Her face is very familiar, but I can't think why. Either I have seen her or she reminds me of some one I have seen. Oh, now I know; it is Madame Risteau, the concert singer. I have heard her once or twice. She has a lovely voice, and she is very good looking."

"I don't believe she is as good looking as my dear Mrs. Marriott, even if there is a resemblance," returned Joanne putting away the photograph. "She is musical, too, and her son, Bob, plays on the violin like an angel."

"That reminds me of something. Did you know we girls are to give a concert or have a minstrel show, or something?"

"Hadn't heard of it. When is it to be?"

"I don't think there is any date fixed. They are skirmishing around to get performers, and make up a programme. I promised to sell some tickets. It is to be for some worthy object, tuberculosis hospital, I believe. Come, let's go hunt up Clausie; it was she who told me about it; Miss Chesney told her."

"Miss Dodge told Miss Chesney, no doubt. It's a regular Henny Penny sort of tale, isn't it? There's a box of fudge, Win. Help yourself while I dress."

"Did you make it?" inquired Winnie, picking up a square of fudge and looking at it critically.

"I did, child of an inquiring mind, and if you say it isn't good, I shall cut your acquaintance."

Winnie nibbled off a corner of the square. "It's prime. How many things have you learned to cook in the past year, Jo?"

"Mercy me! I don't know. Ask me what I don't know how to cook. You remember my experience in being chief cook and bottle washer last fall when Gradda was ill and we had no maid. After that I don't believe anything can ever feaze me again, not in the way of housekeeping at least."

"You certainly have had your ups and downs, blithe spirit," replied Winnie, finishing her piece of fudge and helping herself to another. "The way you have bounced along through all sorts of jobs is a caution."

"Do blithe spirits bounce?" said Joanne vigorously brushing her hair.

"Don't be hypercritical, my child. If you prefer it I will say the way you have airily flitted. Honest to goodness, Jo, you are a wonder. This time next year I expect to see you sporting around as a Golden Eaglet."

"If I don't fall down on the rest of my tests I'm beginning to have hopes myself."

"Why should you fall down?"

"Oh, I don't know. One has to get into deep waters sometime, I suppose. I'm sorter, kinder scared of the health things. It's tremendously hard to be prudent always, and I do love sweet things."

Winnie looked ruefully at the third piece of fudge

which she had just extracted from the box. "Why did you say that?" she lamented. "I was having such a nice free time with this fudge and now I am confronted by the word Duty with a large D. Get thee back, foul fiend!" she exclaimed dropping the fudge back into the box.

"How dare you call my fudge a foul fiend," cried Joanne laughing.

"Put it away! Lock it up!" cried Winnie jumping up and going to the window. "I am a poor weak sister, and as long as it is in sight I shall not be able to resist the temptation of eating on and on and on. When it comes to home-made fudge I am a perfect pig. I know so much isn't good for me. Already I have eaten too many Christmas candies, and now I act as if I had not had a sweet thing for ages. I shall keep on looking out the window till you assure me that box is safely hidden from view."

"I call that noble self-denial," said Joanne as she skurried the box into a drawer. "The only trouble is that now I shall have to be the martyr and eat what you have left. No, I will not," she added drawing forth the box again. "I will take what's left to Clausie. I will have the strength of mind to withstand temptation."

"And make poor Clausie go through the same agonies," said Winnie with a little giggle.

Joanne looked down at the box undecidedly. "Then what shall I do? throw it away?"

"Oh, never, never," cried Winnie with such feeling that both laughed. "Take it to some one who never has anything of the kind and who has grown beyond the temptations of youth."

"Do you suppose there exists any one who could grow beyond the temptation of eating candy of any kind?" asked Joanne.

"Of course. I know ever and ever so many who spurn it."

"I don't wish to doubt your veracity, but that is hard to believe," returned Joanne with a sigh. "My grandparents don't. Tell me where to find a spurner and off goes this box post haste."

"Why not send it to your friend, Mrs. Marriott? She will have the judgment to know when to stop eating it."

"The very thing!" declared Joanne. "You have saved my life, Win. I will do it up at once and we can mail it on our way to Clausie's."

"Mrs. Marriott will think it a pretty attention," Winnie went on, "and if she is such a person as you describe she will be discreet. Moreover you won't have to see it standing around where you can cast longing looks at it."

"You don't think I should keep it for the grandparents?" asked Joanne pausing in her act of tying a string.

"Haven't they had any?"

"Oh, yes, a lot."

" As much as is good for them, probably. You can make some more when this has passed out of their memories."

So the fudge went to Mrs. Marriott and if Bob ate the most of it he was of that age and of that healthy condition when a box of fudge more or less had no effect upon him.

From Clausie the girls heard more of the prospective concert. The chief performer, a friend of Miss Dodge, was said to be a fine violinist and upon him they would depend for the best numbers of their programme, but he could not be with them as yet and so the concert would have to be deferred.

" We all think now that it will have to be put off till the Easter holidays," said Claudia. " Better so, for that will give more time for rehearsing. It is foolish to dash into a thing before you have made the proper preparations."

" Dear me," said Joanne regretfully, " I thought we would have something to get excited over, and now it is all slumped."

Claudia laughed. " I don't call it a slump. For my part I'm rather glad it is put off, for we shall all be busy enough with school work, exams. and all that."

" Not to mention our scout work," Winnie put in. " We'll have excitement enough, never you fear."

Joanne looked sober. " That reminds me," she said, " that I haven't made my star map. I fully intended making it this winter, and here the winter is leaping

along like a rabbit. Grad gave me a wonderful constellation finder at Christmas with a perfectly adorable map, and I have scarcely looked at them. There was so much going on during the holidays, and then came school, besides it is stupid to do things alone."

"Why don't we do them together, then?" said Claudia. "Neither Winnie nor I have finished our star maps, and I'm sure I don't know the 'Song of the Fifty Stars,' do you, Win?"

"Indeed I do not. Let's start in now. Get your handbook, Clausie. No time like the present."

Claudia went off for her book. "I don't believe I know further than Capella," she announced as she came back, open book in hand.

"Oh, I can do better than that," declared Winnie. "I am sure I have learned as far as Spica. What about you, Jo?"

"I've scarcely begun. Of course I know a few of the stars. Grad is wonderful in his knowledge of them, being a sailor man, and he has pointed out some. He'll be perfectly delighted if I finish a map."

"Your grandfather is such an old dear," remarked Winnie. "I'd love to have one just like him; I can say that as I do not remember either of mine. Where shall we meet, Clausie, and when?"

"Why not meet here on Friday nights, unless something special comes up? You know our upper porch is a fine lookout place, to say nothing of the cupola. If it is cold we can wrap up, and if it rains or is too

cloudy we'll do something else. You girls can stay all night and we'll have a joyous time."

"I think that's the loveliest plan ever," cried Joanne, "and I think you are a perfect dear, Clausie, to suggest it. I hope Gradda won't object; she's sort of queer about my getting from under her wing, you know. Last summer was the first time she ever consented to it, and then it was only after Grad read her the Riot act."

"He'll have to do it again, I think," returned Winnie laughing. "He'll approve of your studying the stars, I am sure, so it will be easy to get him around to your side."

"Oh, you must come," insisted Claudia. "I'm really crazy about the plan. I don't see why we didn't think of it sooner."

Joanne looked thoughtful. "I'm afraid Gradda will argue that I can study stars with Grad any old time."

"But you can't do it half so well in a shut-in street as out here," protested Claudia.

"True, O queen. Well, I'll do my best. Come on, Winnie; if we want to get home before dark we'd better 'git goin',' as Unc' Aaron says."

After several delays they started off full of the project suggested by Claudia. "I didn't like to confess it," said Joanne when they were on their way, "but do you know I have never stayed over night with girls? For some reason Gradda is set against it, and I am

just crazy to do it. Of course last summer up at camp was much the same thing, but not exactly."

"It doesn't seem possible," exclaimed Winnie. "I thought all girls did. I've spent the night at Claudia's scores of times. I don't see what could be the objection."

"Neither do I," responded Joanne; "it is only one of Gradda's little idiosyncrasies."

They parted at the corner, Winnie's parting charge being: "Try your grandfather first."

CHAPTER XVIII

UNDER THE STARS

FOLLOWING Winnie's advice Joanne hunted up her grandfather as soon as she went in the house. She found him, where he usually was at this hour, in the library reading the evening paper.

"Well, Pickings," he said looking up, "what's the good word this evening?"

"Stars," returned Joanne.

"Has something struck you and made you see stars?"

"No, Grad, but it has struck me that I want to see stars. We girls, Winnie Merryman and Claudia Price and I have decided to study the heavens every Friday that it is clear enough, and I'm going to begin a star map right away. You know how it is done? You take an old umbrella and a lot of little paper stars which you stick on the inside of the umbrella in the forms of the constellations. Then when you have learned the constellations you draw them from memory so that in time you learn them all, and can recognize them when you look up."

"Fine! I'm glad you are beginning to take an interest in the stars. They have kept me company many

a night at sea, and seem like real friends. I was wondering what you were going to do with that finder. I'm glad you can make use of it."

"I think it would really be better than the umbrella, but I'll start in with that, for I think in sticking them on I'll get to know the stars better; after a while I can discard it. The Prices have such a perfectly dandy place to look from, that cupola, you know. Clausie wants me to come out and spend Friday nights with her; Win's going to. Don't you think it will be all right?"

"Why, I don't see why not. You'd better ask your grandmother, however."

"Oh, but, Grad, you know how fussy Gradda is. She has never let me spend the night with any of my girl friends, never, never. I don't know what she is afraid of, germs or what, but anyway, she has some sort of idea that I'll come home with the measles or that the house will burn down or that they'll kidnap me or something; I don't know what. Do please, like a darling, say I can go, and I shall have that much to depend upon."

"But suppose she declares that you can't, what then?"

"Then you and I will have to join forces. You wouldn't go back on your word, of course, and you'll help me argue her into saying yes. Please, most wise and sapient seignor, say I may go." Joanne dropped on her knees before her grandfather and held up her

hands in supplication. "You won't, oh, I know you won't afflict me so sorely as to deny your consent, and send me down to the depths of despair. Sweet sir, do not deny me here a suppliant for your favor."

"You ridiculous child, get up. State precisely what you want me to do."

Joanne settled herself upon her grandfather's knee and began to toy with the locks of hair which touched his forehead. "I want you to say up and down, cross my heart, 'Yes, Joanne, you may go.' Then if Gradda objects you must gird on your armor and do battle for me."

"It strikes me that you are very capable of doing battle for yourself."

"But what can one poor weak maid do alone? I need your valorous assistance to bring her around to our point of view. Do you promise?" She took her grandfather's face between her hands. "I feel a fountain of tears ready to gush forth at the very thought that you may desert me in my hour of need."

"Turn off the water works, and let us have no gushing of fountains. I'll promise to do my best."

"Oh, you cunning, precious thing!" ejaculated Joanne giving him an ardent kiss. Then she sat back and looked at him wistfully. "But you do approve, don't you? You're not saying it because I cajoled you into it?"

Her grandfather laughed. "Don't question me too closely."

"Grad!" The tears were actually dimming her eyes.

"There, there, dear child," he said patting her arm. "I do approve of anything which makes you happy and in which I see no harm. There is no reason in the world, which I can see, why you should not combine study with pleasure when it comes about in this way."

"Then come on, let's get it over with." Joanne jumped up, held out her hand and together they went to find Mrs. Selden.

As was to be expected, there were objections raised at the outset, but these were finally overcome in a measure when Joanne's most telling argument was launched. "Tell me, honest Injun, Gradda," she said, "did you never spend the night with your girl friends when you were my age? When did you begin to do it?"

Mrs. Selden reflected. "I think I was about your age," she admitted at last, "but," she added hastily, "it was not a custom. I went very seldom, certainly not once a week as you propose to do."

"But it won't be every week," argued Joanne. "If the weather is bad or if any of us have some other thing we must do, we'll call it off."

Mrs. Selden counted the stitches in the piece of fancy work she was doing before she answered. "Well," she said finally, "I think you may be permitted to go once at least; after that we will see."

With this much of a triumph Joanne had to be sat-

isfied. At least she had neither whined nor wept, as she would have done in the old days. Her grandfather had stood by her valiantly, putting in a word now and then to help her cause, and she felt that she could let the future take care of itself.

To the delight of all three girls the next Friday night was a clear one, and, bearing wraps, lanterns, old umbrellas and other paraphernalia, they climbed to the cupola after dinner amid much laughter and many animated remarks. They found it rather chilly, but they bundled up and managed to stick it out till ten o'clock.

"I really feel that we have accomplished something," declared Claudia as she led the way with her lantern down the first flight of stairs. "It is everything to have made a beginning."

"I am sure I shall always know Capella now," said Joanne; "she is such a nice Mother Goat watching her three little kids. I think I like her better than any other star."

"My favorite is Vega," announced Winnie; "she is such a wonderful blue star, but the trouble is that the stars rise and set at different times according to the season and you can't always find them in the same place."

"You can if you just spot Orion and take him as a guide," said Claudia; "at least you can find your star, though not in the same place."

"I always pick out the Great Dipper as my guide,"

said Joanne, "for I can always find the North Star then."

"It certainly is mighty interesting," remarked Winnie with satisfaction as they reached the second floor. "I hardly realized how the time passed. If we keep on we'll be sitting up all night to watch the stars. I could scarcely believe it when you said it was ten o'clock."

They passed on to Claudia's room where they compared umbrellas and then prepared for bed, rather a long process since there was much running back and forth from the room Claudia and Winnie occupied together to the one which Joanne had to herself, and when they settled down for the night it would be surprising if one at least did not dream of stars.

After this many a night did Joanne spend with Claudia, for having given her consent in the first instance, Mrs. Selden had little excuse to withhold it thereafter. By spring all three of the girls knew the "Song of the Fifty Stars," and had placed them on their maps. They knew, too, the principal constellations, and felt that their Friday nights had not been spent in vain.

The winter slipped away rapidly and all of a sudden spring was at hand. Joanne gave a little tea to her school friends to celebrate the first day of her acquaintance with them; then the Sunflower Troop gave her a tea to celebrate her coming into their midst.

"You are our star member, you know," said Win-

nie. "You have won more badges in a year than any girl in the troop."

"Still I'm not a Golden Eaglet," replied Joanne, "and I thought I could be in a year."

"You expect too much, child," returned Winnie. "Rome was not built in a day, as I frequently remind you. You are on the high road to Golden Eagletism, but you mustn't try to fly too high or you'll get lost in the clouds."

"But Clausie has reached her goal."

"She's been longer at it than you. Do you know I think you're a wee bit too ambitious."

"But aren't you working to the same end?"

"Yes, but I am not crazy to get there at one jump. I don't want to use up all my enthusiasm at one fell swoop. I want to keep something ahead."

"I don't seem to be built that way. I like to plunge in boldly and get through with it, then do something else."

"What next?"

"Oh, I don't know; there will be something. Besides, knowing enough to pass a test doesn't mean that you have exhausted a subject."

"There is something in that," returned Winnie thoughtfully.

"Well, there's one thing certain," remarked Joanne, "I am glad I know as much about the stars as I do; I may need them to guide me some night."

"That sounds just like you," laughed Winnie. "I

haven't a doubt but you have imagined a situation and revelled in it."

Joanne looked a little confused. "Well, maybe I have, but it doesn't hurt to imagine what you would do under certain circumstances, then you are prepared, and 'Be prepared' is our motto."

"I'm floored," cried Winnie. "I've nothing to say to that argument."

A few days after this talk Joanne was called to the 'phone by her Cousin Sue. "Want to go after trailing arbutus?" inquired Mrs. Pattison.

"I'll say I do," quickly replied Joanne with a little giggle.

"Bad child, I've a mind to leave you behind."

"But you won't, will you? Just change your mind back to your original intention. When, where and how are you going?"

"We're going this afternoon, early, up to the lodge. Ned will take us. It is such a perfect spring day and I am wild to get into the woods. Can you go?"

"I don't see why not, but I'll ask Gradda."

"You go along and get ready and I'll ask her. Tell her I want to speak to her over the 'phone. Wear your rubbers and take a sweater, Joanne; it will be cool coming back."

Fortunately it was Saturday and there would be a long afternoon before them, Joanne considered as she made her preparations. She had not been up to the farm since that winter day when they had gone for

Christmas greens, and she longed to see Chico again; Pablo, too.

She rushed around gathering up rubbers and sweater which she thrust into the little bag which she carried to Claudia's for her Friday night visits; it was just possible, she thought, that they might stay over night and it was as well to be prepared.

The journey over the familiar road was soon made. Silver of river, misty green of shores gladdened their way. An open fire was burning on the hearth at the lodge, Unc' Aaron had seen to that; the little house, swept and garnished, looked none the worse for its silent wintering.

"We mustn't lose any time," said Mrs. Pattison. "While Ned is talking things over with Mr. Clover we'll off to the woods to find arbutus. I know where there should be some."

They climbed the high cliff behind the lodge, picking their way over the rough winding path, then down to a little glen the other side. Mrs. Pattison was the first to pounce upon a patch of the delicate waxen flowers hidden under their blanket of brown leaves.

"That's yours by right of discovery," declared Joanne. "I'll go hunt for myself."

"You must be on the watch for the green leaves peeping out of a cover of brown," her cousin counseled her.

"I see," returned Joanne. "It's lucky we wore our rubbers, for there are ever so many tiny rivulets trying

to find their way down the hill. One has to go quite a circuitous route to get a crossing sometimes."

She started off, pretty soon coming upon a modest plot of the arbutus. "I've found some," she called back.

Mrs. Pattison waved a reply and Joanne went on, soon becoming absorbed in her search, while her cousin, equally busy, was presently out of range of her voice.

Finding scant growth on this side the hill, Joanne climbed to the top and disappeared down the other side while Mrs. Pattison continued on in the direction she had started. It was such fascinating employment that neither thought of much else, so Joanne went on and on more absorbed as she found a greater abundance of the flowers the farther she went. In course of time the little basket she carried was full. She arose from her crouching position and looked around. She could not see the river nor the canal, but shining between the trunks of the trees she saw a pink-flecked sky.

"Dear me, how far I must have wandered," said Joanne to herself. "It is getting late, too. I must hurry back. Let me see." She looked around to get her bearings. "That is the sunset, of course. The sun sets up the river, so I must go in a westerly direction, of course." She stood still and took a survey of her surroundings. "It doesn't seem to me that I came over that hill, but it must be the one, for I am confident that I must travel west."

She trudged along, after a while coming to a rough road through the woods. It looked as if it had been used by teamsters. "I don't remember this," said Joanne, "but probably it leads the right way, so I'll follow it." She kept on for some time. The light faded. The woods became dark. A little quiver of anxiety passed over Joanne. "If I could only get out into the open," she said, "I could tell exactly which way to go. The sun must set in the west; it can't help it. I'll keep on going."

Again she took up her line of march and after a while she came to a little open place where she could see a slender line of light on one side and the pink clouds changing to purple on the other. She was aghast. "I believe I am wrong after all," she exclaimed. "Who could tell that it was only the sunset's reflection that I saw? I know that sometimes the sky is more brilliant in the east at sundown than it is in the west. I am all twisted up. I don't know which way to go." She looked back into the gloomy shadows of the woods from which she had just come. They seemed rather fearsome now, and the girl hesitated to go back. "This road must lead somewhere," she murmured. "It couldn't just happen. If I could only reach a point where I could see the river I would know which way to go."

Again she pressed ahead. It grew darker and darker. The road led directly through the woods, and soon it became indistinct before her, but at last she

reached a clearing where stumps of trees stood ghostily around her. She looked up. The stars were coming out. "Now I can find my way," she said exultantly. "Once I locate the North Star I shall get my points."

She suddenly realized that she was very tired. She sat down on a stump and looked up at the heavens where the stars were growing brighter and brighter. One after another she could distinguish them, and so learned the direction she should go in order to reach the farm. She must retrace her steps. At the thought of going through the dark woods alone she shuddered. There might be more dangers there than in mere darkness. She felt weary and faint. She had eaten nothing since the early lunch. She dropped her head into her hands while the tears trickled between her fingers.

"Why was I so silly as to wander off from Cousin Sue?" she said to herself. "How worried they will be. I had no business to be such a stupid creature." She sat so for a few minutes, then jumped up with an air of determination. "There's no use in being a coward," she went on. "I don't mean to sit here all night. Now shall I keep on following this road or shall I go back?"

She stood still trying to make up her mind when suddenly she saw a flicker of flame ahead. She walked on a few paces and then stopped. A short distance away she saw two figures bending over a

camp fire, then she discovered the outlines of a small building. A habitation at last, though it appeared to be only a rough log cabin. "If there are women there it will be all right," she told herself.

She crept closer, and stealthily regarded the two figures. Presently one of them stood erect and she saw that he wore the uniform of a Boy Scout!

With a little cry of joy she ran forward calling, "Boys! Boys!"

The boys quickly turned, to be astonished by the apparition of a slim girl in a blue serge frock and sweater, a basket of flowers on her arm, her hair dishevelled, her hands stained. "Ye gods and little fishes!" exclaimed one of the boys.

The other one regarded her closely as she came nearer, then rushing toward her with outstretched hands he cried, "By the living Jingo, if it isn't Joanne Selden!"

"Bob! Bob Marriott! how in the world did you get here?" said Joanne half laughing, half crying.

"How did you get here? That's more to the point," said Bob, shaking her hands vigorously.

"I lost my way," admitted Joanne. "I don't see how I did it, but I mistook east for west and didn't discover my mistake till the stars came out."

"But where did you start from? I thought you were in Washington."

"I was this morning. I came up with Cousin Ned Pattison and his wife. Cousin Sue and I went off to

gather arbutus and I got separated from her. Cousin Ned's farm is somewhere hereabouts. In my present state of mind I can't tell you where, but it is where I should be this minute and where I must be as soon as I can get there. They'll be worried to death, and probably are scouring the woods for me by now."

"Mr. Pattison's place, did you say?" said Bob's friend, coming forward.

"Mr. Ned Pattison's, yes; he is my cousin."

"Oh, I know where that is all right," said the boy.

"By the way," interrupted Bob, "this is my friend, Jack Barry. This is Joanne Selden, Jack. You've grown so, Joanne, it is a wonder I recognized you."

"Have you had any supper?" inquired Jack.

"No-o," admitted Joanne.

"Then you must be mighty hungry. We'll all have something to eat and then we will escort you back."

Joanne gave a deep sigh of relief. She was cold, hungry and weary, and the prospect that all her needs would be supplied made her very willing to sit down before the crackling blaze and accept the food offered. A steaming cup of cocoa, bacon and eggs, bread and butter heartened her completely, although she felt worried because of the anxiety she knew her cousins must be feeling.

However the three comrades chatted happily over their supper and Joanne learned that Bob had come to visit Jack Barry for the Easter holidays, that Jack's

uncle owned the ground upon which they were, and that the two boys had walked up from Washington.

"You see," said Jack, "my uncle sold the timber from this piece of forest, and they have just finished cutting. They had a sawmill set up and that little shack is where the woodcutters lived. The road you came over is the one that was used for the teams that hauled the timber. They have cut out the big timber and have left only that which isn't fit for cutting. Uncle Phil said we boys could use the shack if we wanted to, and we think it is a great scheme."

"We've been busy getting it cleaned up," Bob said, "for of course it was left in a pretty bad state."

Joanne peeped into the little cabin when Bob went to get two lanterns and Jack extinguished the fire. It was a rough looking place with bunks at one side, a clumsy table, a couple of benches and a few shelves, but, as Bob said, it served.

In a few minutes the three started off, Joanne feeling very safe under the escort of the two Boy Scouts. Mr. Pattison's farm adjoined that owned by Jack's uncle, and soon they were in sight of the river. A little further on they heard some one calling, then the clatter of hoofs, and presently appeared a horse and rider dashing toward them.

"It's Pablo and Chico!" cried Joanne stopping short.

The little pony whinnied and came to a standstill. Pablo swung himself to the ground, dropped on

his knees and cried: "*Gracias a Dios!* it is the señorita!"

"Quite safe and sound," declared Joanne. "Here are my two rescuers, Pablo. One of them is an old friend. Do you remember him?"

"Why, hello, Pablo," exclaimed Bob, "do you remember me?"

Pablo stared. "It is *mi amigo* Roberto," he exclaimed.

"We are getting surprises all around," said Bob. "I certainly am glad to see you again. I have often wondered where you were, Pablo. You never told us when you were writing to mother," he said in an aside to Joanne.

"Oh, dear, no; I always had so much else to tell her, about the Girl Scouts and school and all that."

"The señorita must return on Chico," said Pablo. "Unc' Aaron have a horse to ride the roads, the cousin of you, Mr. Pattison, another. Who is find you make a signal of fire from the hilltop."

"You'll come too, to keep me in countenance, won't you?" said Joanne to the other two boys, as she mounted the pony.

"I suppose we may as well see the adventure to a finish." Bob looked at Jack.

"I'm with you," replied Jack.

So the rescued maiden, on her palfrey and with her body-guard, proceeded safely through the dark forest.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CONCERT

BEFORE the little party reached the lodge Pablo had rushed on ahead to give the news of Joanne's safety, and presently a beacon fire shot up from the top of the hill, so that almost as soon as Joanne arrived the searchers for her began to come in, first Mr. Clover, then Mr. Pattison, last of all Unc' Aaron.

Mrs. Pattison was the first to greet her. "If I wasn't so glad to see you," she said, hugging and kissing her, "I'd scold you well for running away and scaring us all nearly to death."

"But I didn't run and I didn't mean to get lost. I was scared, too."

"Of course you were, and after all it was my fault for not keeping you in sight. I told Ned that."

"Was he very angry?"

"More alarmed than angry. We didn't know what might have happened. Well, dear child, I don't think I was ever so glad to see any one. You must be half starved. Come in and get something to eat."

"The boys saw to it that I had something," Joanne

told her. "I want you to meet my friends, Bob Marriott and Jack Barry. They are my rescuers from the snare of the fowler and the terror that walketh by night."

Mrs. Pattison shook hands with them both, saying, "I can't thank you enough for taking care of this poor child, and for finding her."

"We didn't find her; she found us," declared Jack. "She walked into our camp just like that."

"And wasn't I surprised and delighted when I saw two Boy Scouts?" said Joanne. "And when I discovered that one of them was an old friend, you may imagine how pleased I was."

"Well, even if you have had supper you must have a fresh appetite after your long walk," said Mrs. Pattison, "so do come in and have a bite."

The boys were glad of an excuse to see the interior of the lodge, so they all went inside, Joanne still clinging to her basket of flowers, and it is safe to say that all three gave no evidence of having eaten an hour earlier, from the way they despatched sandwiches, milk and cakes.

The meal was not finished before Mr. Clover appeared, to whom Joanne must tell the story of her wanderings, then Cousin Ned had to have an account, and last of all Unc' Aaron, whose ejaculations were a steady accompaniment to the recital.

"Praise de Lawd yuh is safe! I say don' know whicher way to go! All in de dark, po' li'l lamb!

Tard an' hongry! Bress de Lawd yuh sees dat fiah! Whar yuh be now ef yuh hasn't? Uh! uh! ain' it de troof dey Boy Scouches?" These and others were his frequent interruptions.

They were all sitting around the fire, Joanne the center of attention, when presently the growling of thunder was heard, a flash of lightning, a second and louder crash of thunder, then the pattering of drops on the roof. Unc' Aaron, Pablo and Mr. Clover scudded away hastily. The boys prepared to follow.

"You mustn't think of going back to camp," exclaimed Mr. Pattison putting a detaining hand on Bob's arm. "There is plenty of room here. I am used to stowing away twice as many."

The boys hesitated, protested, but finally gave in. The prospect of a walk in a heavy thunder-storm did not appeal to them. Joanne hid her face in her Cousin Sue's lap. "Suppose, just suppose, I were still out in the woods," she said quaveringly.

"Thank God, you are not," returned her cousin caressing the dark head on her knees.

"And but for me you would all be safe at home in Washington," Joanne went on, lifting her head.

"I'm rather glad of an excuse to be here," said Mrs. Pattison.

Joanne mentally agreed with her. It was very cosey sitting there by the open fire, safe from the lashing rain, and joining in the pleasant talk of friends, then when the thunder died away to occasional distant

mutterings, to snuggle down in bed and listen to the gentle patter of the rain on the roof.

The morning broke bright and clear. Everything had been washed clean. The river sparkled in the sunlight; the misty green of trees showed fresher color; the grass was hung with myriads of glistening drops; shining rills ran down the hillside. Joanne looked out from her little window to see it all. The odor of griddle cakes soon took her down-stairs, however, and there she found Unc' Aaron busy in the kitchen, the boys already up and out exploring, Mrs. Pattison setting the table, and Mr. Pattison tinkering at something about his automobile. Joanne's appearance was the signal for Unc' Aaron to sound the horn which hung outside the kitchen door, and presently the old man was kept so busy baking cakes that he could do nothing else, and the boys took turns in hurrying them from griddle to table. How they did eat! Fortunately Unc' Aaron was never anything if not bountiful in his providing, and there was still a little batter left when all had declared there was an end to appetite.

The boys could not resist a scamper over the wet roads on Chico, coming back enthusiastic about the pony's good points. "Little did I think when I first saw the little fellow that I would some day be riding him down here in Maryland," said Bob. "One never knows what will happen. How interested mother will be when I tell her of this adventure."

The temptation to eat one of Unc' Aaron's chicken dinners was too much for the boys to withstand, and after some faint protests they consented to stay till the others should start back home.

"After eating all those cakes this morning I don't see how I could have eaten all this dinner," said Bob, looking at his empty plate.

"I do," returned Mr. Pattison. "I don't think any one of us can throw a stone at the others. My plate is as empty as yours, Bob, and the same can be said of the rest."

"That makes me feel better," said Bob.

Leaving the boys at their camp the others went on to Washington to reach there before dark. Joanne, laden down with her basket of arbutus, a store of eggs, and a pair of chickens, was not questioned too closely by her grandmother, though she was honest enough to say: "I got lost in the woods when I was hunting arbutus, but I came across two Boy Scouts and they took me home. Guess who one of them was, Gradda."

"How should I know? I am not acquainted with any of your Boy Scouts."

"You are with this one; you know his mother, too. I was so surprised when I ran across him. It was Bob Marriott, Gradda, and the boy with him was named Jack Barry."

"I wonder if he is any relation to Eleanor Lewis; she married a John Barry. I knew the Barrys well,"

said Mrs. Selden reminiscently, more concerned in this question than in the manner of Joanne's meeting the boys. "Eleanor Lewis was an intimate friend of your mother's, Joanne. A mighty nice girl she was, too. I should be glad to meet her again. Do these Barrys live in Washington, did you say?"

"They live at Chevy Chase. Jack's uncle owns the place next to Cousin Ned's; that's how they happened to be up there. The boys promised to come to see us; then you can find out if it is the same family of Barrys. Bob is visiting Jack, you know."

This matter so occupied Mrs. Selden's mind that she asked no more questions, and Joanne congratulated herself that she had avoided a lecture. She told her grandfather all about it, however. He listened gravely and shook his head solemnly as she concluded her story.

"Joanne, Joanne," he said, "I'm afraid I can't permit you to go to the country again unless you promise on your word of honor never to go into the woods alone."

"But I didn't go alone; Cousin Sue was with me and we kind of got separated. I wandered off, as it were."

"Then you must promise never to do so again; always keep your companions in sight."

"You bet I will," replied Joanne so fervently that her grandfather realized that he need not lay any greater emphasis on his command.

The boys were prompt in making their call, when it was discovered that Jack's father was *the* John Barry who married Eleanor Lewis, a fact which gave Joanne as much satisfaction as it did her grandmother, and when it was discovered that Mrs. Barry was also an intimate friend of Mrs. Marriott's there was given an added zest to the acquaintance. Mrs. Barry lost no time in coming to see Mrs. Selden and left Joanne in a state of blissful anticipation when she said that she expected a visit from Mrs. Marriott very soon and she would insist upon Joanne's coming out to spend a day with them.

"So many lovely things are happening," sighed Joanne when she met Winnie the next day, and told of all that had been going on.

"I don't call getting lost in the dark woods a lovely thing," remarked Winnie.

"Yes, but what it led to was lovely, and loveliest of all will be to see dear Mrs. Marriott again."

"Well, don't get so absorbed in her that you can't think of the concert which is to be next week, you know. We must all hustle and sell as many tickets as we can. Has any one promised to buy from you?"

"Oh, dear, I haven't even asked."

"Just what I thought. You should sell at least ten. There are the Pattisons, your grandparents, and these new people, the Barrys, that should mean eight at least, and you should get rid of two more without half trying." Winnie checked them off on her fingers.

"I'll start in right away," Joanne promised rather half-heartedly, "though I hate to do things like that."

"You should be glad to do it for a good cause like this."

"Maybe I shall be when I get waked up to it. Is the programme all arranged?"

"I think so. Miss Dodge is working hard over it. The violin numbers are to be the chief attraction, of course. We girls are to sing a spring chorus, you know that of course, for we have been rehearsing for ages. We are to dress in pale green; the soloist in pink and white; it will be rather pretty, I think. The Boy Scouts have offered to act as ushers."

"Do you mean the violinist is to dress in pink and white?" asked Joanne slyly.

"Of course not, silly. I mean the singing persons. Claus is to take one solo, Miriam Overton another. Mirry has a nice voice if she is fat. Miss Chesney will be at the piano. The tickets will be ready in a day or two, so you'd better get busy, Jo."

Joanne did get busy and in her impetuous way made short work of selling her tickets, for the Pattisons took three and Mrs. Barry five instead of the four counted on, saying that she hoped Mrs. Marriott would be one of her party. The remaining two Joanne lost no time in selling to her grandparents, therefore, though she was the last to enter the selling list, she was the first to dispose of her tickets.

"I never saw anything like you," complained Win-

nie; "you sweep through a thing like a cyclone. I no sooner announce that I have begun a thing than you breeze in and tell me you have finished."

Joanne laughed. "I vas always yust like dot," she answered. "You don't set sufficient value upon my imaginative qualities. When I am going to attack a problem I always plan what I would do if my first effort failed. For instance, if I hadn't sold those tickets right hot off the bat, I knew exactly where I would go next. In my mind's eye I saw Mrs. Barry turning me down because of some previous engagement or something like that, and I was all ready to fly off to some of Grad's navy friends who would do anything for him or for me because I am his granddaughter."

"Dear me, I always said you were lucky in your grandparents," sighed Winnie. "Here I have four tickets I can't get rid of and look at you."

"Look at me good and hard," responded Joanne, holding out her hand. "Give me your tickets; I'll get rid of them."

"But I thought you hated to do that kind of thing. I couldn't think of imposing on you."

"You needn't worry. The breath of battle is in my nostrils. I am all girded for the fray. My fires of enthusiasm haven't died out yet, so you'd better let me go to it while I am inspired. Moreover, beloved Winifred, I want to offer my services in the cause of friendship."

Thus appealed to Winnie drew forth the tickets, and the next evening Joanne reported to her over the 'phone that she had sold them all.

There was great excitement behind the scenes at the hall where the concert was to take place on a certain evening in April. Some of the girls had already arrived when Joanne reached there in her pretty dress of misty green. Claudia, in pink and white, rushed up to her. "The most awful thing has happened," she announced, "and poor Miss Dodge is very nearly in tears."

"What in the world is the matter?" asked Joanne, laying aside her cloak.

"She has had a telegram from the man who was to play the violin. He has been taken ill with grippe and cannot possibly come. Miss Dodge is madly telephoning in every direction to get some one, any one, to take his place. It is tragic. The hall is already filling up and there is no time to spare. It will be a perfect fizzle if something can't be done."

Joanne stood still for a moment, her eyes fixed thoughtfully upon the ground. "Perhaps — perhaps ——" she said presently. Then she broke off with the inquiry, "Where is Miss Dodge?"

"In there," said Claudia, pushing her toward the door, then pulling her back. "I wouldn't disturb her with expressions of sympathy, Jo; she's worked up to the highest pitch."

"I'm not going to offer her sympathy," returned

Joanne with a toss of her head. "I have an idea. If it works it will help her out of her difficulty."

She walked on toward the door, closed it after her and left Claudia staring.

Just then Winnie came up. Claudia repeated her conversation with Joanne. The worried look left Winnie's face. "Trust Jo," she said. "I'll bet you anything that she has some scheme in her noddle and that it will work. Just you wait and see."

The two girls hung around the door till, in a few minutes, they saw Miss Dodge come out, a smile upon her face, her arm around Joanne. "This dear child has saved the day," said Miss Dodge. "I was desperate when she came in."

"What did you do, Jo?" cried the other two girls.

"I called up Bob Marriott. I was awfully afraid he had left. He is staying with the Barrys at Chevy Chase, you know, but they have a car and hadn't started. I explained the situation and begged Bob to bring his violin. He plays really wonderfully well, and he said he would do it. I asked him to wear his Boy Scout uniform, for I thought that would make an appeal to the audience, so he will be along directly and we can go on with the programme all right."

"He won't be able to play the numbers on the programme, perhaps," said Miss Dodge, "but we'll get some one to announce them, and I think Miss Chesney is equal to playing his accompaniments. Get to your places, girls, for the curtain must go up."

The girls hurried to the stage and when the curtain was raised it disclosed a row of green-clad maidens, and at each end of the row, like a blossom, was a girl in pink and white. They were greeted by cordial applause and the spring chorus began. Joanne, a little nervous, kept watching for Bob's arrival, but she was not disappointed, for she saw him off in the wings before the last note of the chorus ended. While he was conferring with Miss Chesney over the music he had brought, Miss Dodge made a little speech of explanation, but no one appeared to be greatly chagrined when, instead of the expected performer, a slender lad in khaki appeared. A great clapping of hands welcomed him and he responded so well that even greater applause was given him at the end of his number. He gave Joanne a flashing smile as he passed her on his way off stage, while she, flushed and pleased, wondered what would come next, since the programme must be entirely altered.

Her surprise was great when Miss Dodge again came forward to say: "I am sure you will all be gratified when I tell you that Madame Risteau, whom many of you have heard, has most generously offered to sing for us this evening. It is an unexpected treat for all of us, and I am sure that none of you will go away regretting the substitute of vocal numbers for those originally intended to be given by the violinist."

"Madame Risteau!" whispered Joanne looking at Winnie, who sat next her. Winnie responded with

the same puzzled expression, but Joanne's wonder gave place to absolute amazement when who should walk out upon the stage but Mrs. Marriott!

While the beautiful voice rang out clear and true, Joanne sat in a sort of daze. It was Mrs. Marriott; it must be, yet and yet, it was Madame Risteau. How could she be two persons, or how could two persons look so exactly alike? She had not solved the problem even when the singer, in passing, gave her a brilliant and intimate smile. Again and again was she called to the front of the stage, receiving a perfect ovation. Then Bob came with his violin. Again a cycle of song and at last a concluding chorus. The concert was over.

The curtain had scarcely dropped before Joanne had darted from her place and had rushed to the back, where she found Bob waiting. She gave him both her hands. "You are a perfect dear," she said, "to come to our rescue, and you played wonderfully. Thank you a thousand million times. But, Bob, before I go crazy please tell me how your mother—it is your mother, isn't it? How can she be Madame Risteau as well as Mrs. Marriott?"

Bob laughed. "That's an easy one. She was Madame Risteau before she married my father, and she went upon the concert stage under that name. She sings in public very seldom now, but when she does, it is under the name she was known by. In private life she prefers to be Mrs. Marriott. She sings in church

and for charity, she did often during the war, but not in regular concerts."

The look of bewilderment gradually left Joanne's face. "Please tell me where she is," she said tremblingly. Now the moment of meeting had arrived, she was all of a quiver of excitement. More than ever was her heroine adored.

Bob led the way to the little room where his mother, surrounded by friends, was receiving thanks. "Here she is, mum," cried Bob.

Joanne held back a second, but Mrs. Marriott held out welcoming hands and presently Joanne was clasped in close embrace, and almost ready to weep with joyful excitement.

Then up came sweet Mrs. Barry, Dr. and Mrs. Selden in search of Joanne, so that quite a crowd gathered around the performers, and there was much chatter.

"I said it was Madame Risteau the picture looked like," Winnie found her chance to say.

Joanne laughed and drew Winnie into the circle. "Mrs. Marriott," she said, "I want you to know my dear friend, Winnie Merryman."

It was Winnie's turn to look bewildered. She could hardly acknowledge the introduction for surprise. "But, but——" she stammered, "I thought Miss Dodge said it was Madame Risteau."

"So it is," returned Mrs. Marriott, "though I seldom use the name now. I married at seventeen a young French musician, and have kept his name for

use on the concert stage, as it was by that name I made my success. My husband lived only a few years and after a while I married Mr. Marriott, so in private life I am Mrs. Marriott."

"The concert was simply great," said Chet Lacey, rushing up. "I never heard so many compliments in all my life. People were simply wild. Where is Aunt Nan? I want to tell her about them."

"I'm here," said Miss Chesney coming forward, "but don't think I come in for any compliments. The success is all due to Madame Risteau and her son."

"No, it isn't," spoke up Bob; "it's entirely due to Joanne. We expected to be in the audience till she called us up and told us the thing had slumped and couldn't we come to the rescue."

"You are always coming to my rescue, it seems to me," said Joanne in an aside. "Besides, Bob, your mother volunteered. I hadn't the ghost of an idea that she was here or that she was a famous singer."

"Oh, well, give mother all the credit you choose," said Bob, "but leave me out. I only filled in."

"Gee! if you call that filling in," said Chet, "it's what I'd be perfectly satisfied to do. You filled in and then some."

Then everybody began praising everybody else, the Boy Scouts coming in for their share, and all went home happy; Joanne, probably, the happiest of them all.

CHAPTER XX

REACHING THE GOAL

THE Easter holidays brought Joanne many pleasures, but none greater than the day she spent at Chevy Chase, which gave her the opportunity of a long and intimate talk with Mrs. Marriott.

"It is more than a year since we met," said Joanne regarding her friend with loving eyes, "and I do hope you see some improvement in me."

"I certainly do," was the rejoinder, "and if you have improved as much inside as you have out, there is an immense gain."

Joanne leaned her elbows on Mrs. Marriott's lap and looked up at her candidly. "I hate to think of what a horrid little minx I was, going all to pieces over the slightest thing, crying like a baby when I couldn't have my own way, contradicting Gradda, and lashing around like a wildcat when she brought me to task. I don't see how you stood me."

"Perhaps I didn't see all those things."

"Oh, no doubt I didn't show you the ugly side, and that was being double-faced, wasn't it?"

"Not altogether. I think your eyes weren't opened to some things which you have learned since. That is the way it goes all through life. Every now and then

we turn a page and perceive some bit of knowledge which has not been revealed to us before, then we wonder why our perceptions have been so blunted to a fact which suddenly seems perfectly clear to us. I think we keep on learning to the very day of our death."

Joanne laid her cheek against her friend's hand. "I hope that is true, for I realize I have a lot to learn. The more I do learn the more I discover how ignorant I am, and a year ago I rather prided myself upon being quite a clever somebody, just because I had travelled a little and knew a smattering of one or two languages. I certainly was a sillybilly. I despise conceited people."

Mrs. Marriott smiled. "When did you begin to learn all this wisdom?"

Joanne reflected for a moment. "I think I began with Bob. When he told me about the girls he knew and all they could do, I felt I was a po' ignorant creetur, as Unc' Aaron would say. Then when I started at school I found that younger girls were away ahead of me in certain studies, and when I tried to keep up with my classes and got all mixed up, sometimes I would cry my eyes out because I found I wasn't up to the mark. I had a pretty hard time at first. Gradda would sympathize with me and try to keep me from school when I got down in the dumps, but Winnie would pull me up with a jerk. She gave me credit for the way I worked, but she made fun of me for being such a baby, and that was exactly what I needed."

"Nothing better than ridicule to cure that sort of weakness; in fact, for other sorts, too."

"Is that what you did to make Bob so manly?"

"In a measure, yes."

"I think Bob is the least conceited boy I ever saw. Just see how he played at the concert; not a bit as if he were doing a big thing, but just because it seemed to him a matter of duty, and he meant to do his best. I wish I had a brother like Bob."

"You'll have to adopt him as your brother; he has no sister, you see."

"Then you would be a sort of mother, wouldn't you? I'd love that. I am an only child, just as Bob is, and I do get lonely sometimes, or rather, I used to more than I do now since I have become a Girl Scout, for you know a Girl Scout is sister to every other Girl Scout. I comfort myself thinking that. That's another thing to thank you for. If it hadn't been for you I might have missed my dear Sunflower Troop altogether, and it is such a joy."

"It is a joy to me to know that it is a joy to you. Miss Dodge tells me you have forged right ahead with your tests and that you are hoping to become a Golden Eaglet. I think that is splendid."

Joanne looked down and sighed. "I suppose I was insufferably conceited to say that I would win all my tests in a year. I heard of a girl who did, and I was ambitious to do the same, but I haven't done it. I knew I would fall down on some of the tests, those for

the clerk badge for instance. I needn't tell you that I write an execrable hand and that I can't spell without a dictionary at my elbow."

'But you can learn, of course you can."

"It is the one thing that staggers me. I haven't a bit of sense about it. I began to work hard at it, but it bored me so I stopped."

"You may tell yourself that what you need is application and perseverance. Other things are easy to conquer, and you get impatient when you find this isn't. All the more you must make up your mind that you will succeed. Will you make me a promise?"

"I'll promise you anything."

"Then promise me that you will give ten minutes a day to the one thing and ten to the other. I don't mean ten minutes of scribbling, but of careful and exact following of some copy, and the same care to the spelling. It might be a good thing to combine the two; that is, to write the words you want to learn to spell. There are certain rules you can learn; they would be very helpful, but you mustn't learn them like a parrot, but thoughtfully and intelligently."

"Would it please you if I did that?"

"It would please me greatly if my adopted daughter were to show me that she hasn't a flibberty-gibbet sort of mind, but a studious one. That she can pin herself down to a subject if she chooses, and that she doesn't throw over a thing just because it requires concentration, or because it doesn't particularly interest her."

Joanne gently lifted one of her friend's hands and kissed it. "Now I know why Bob is so fine," she said. "I don't intend my adopted mother and brother shall be ashamed of me, and I promise faithfully to do my best. I did begin to try, but I got tired and slacked off, but I don't mean ever to be called a slacker again."

"Dear little girl," Mrs. Marriott bent over and kissed her, "I am proud of you."

"And I love you more than ever. Please tell me what I may call you. Girls don't call even their adopted mothers Mrs.; and I like to have special names for persons I love."

"What would you like to call me?"

Joanne considered this question very seriously. Finally she said: "Would you mind if I called you Muvvie? I used to call my own mother muvver, and it would be something like that; besides it rhymes with lovey, and in my mind I can say dear Muvvie lovey, when I am thinking of you at night."

Mrs. Marriott answered with a smile though there were tears in her eyes as she said: "I think you are a dear to want to call me that, and I shall be delighted if you will."

"And please don't call me Dotty, for it will make me think you believe I am very silly. You might say Doppy; that will be short for adopted, and just we, ourselves, will understand. Do you know what I call Bob to myself? I call him Robin, because he is so

strong and cheerful, and whistles so clearly and happily."

"I think that is a very nice name for him. Here he comes now with Jack. We have had a very nice talk, haven't we? Yet there are many things left over for another time. Shall I tell Bob he has an adopted sister?"

"Not now; some time when just we three are together."

Mrs. Marriott smiled and nodded, thinking to herself: "Dear child, how seriously she takes it."

Then Bob and Jack came up, and presently Mrs. Barry joined them, and the talk turned to those days when Mrs. Barry and Joanne's mother were girls together. Much as she loved her grandparents Joanne felt that her life was greatly enriched by these new friends, especially when Mrs. Barry whispered, as they were going out to lunch, "Please call me Aunt Ellie. I don't like to think that the daughter of my dear Anne Murray means to treat me with formality."

"I'd love to call you that," Joanne whispered back. Therefore when she left Chevy Chase that afternoon she felt herself much richer than when she arrived there, for had she not an adopted mother, brother and aunt?

"You must come out very often," said Mrs. Barry as she kissed her good-bye.

"I shall love to," returned Joanne enthusiastically, "and between times please think up a lot of things to

tell me about my mother. You know, Aunt Ellie, I have so few relatives, for my father was an only child, as I am, and my mother's brothers and sisters all live in the far west."

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to talk about dear Anne," Mrs. Barry assured her.

She went off feeling that Dame Fortune had been very kind to her. As the car sped along between gardens where pink dogwood and white, lilac and apple blooms gladdened the eye, where yellow and red tulips blazed forth, Joanne inwardly gave thanks for friends and flowers. "It is a beautiful world," she said as she went into the library.

Her grandmother looked up and smiled a little absently, but her grandfather held out his hand. "Come here and tell me about it," he said.

The Easter holidays over, Mrs. Marriott and Bob took their departure but not before Bob had claimed Joanne as a sister and the two promised to write regularly.

"You may find it hard to read my first letter," acknowledged Joanne a little ruefully. "I have such a horrid way of disconnecting my words, so one doesn't know where the letters belong, but I mean to have them all joined up properly by this time next year, see if I don't."

"Go to it, sister," said Bob. "I'll bank on your coming out on top."

But for the fact that school work began again after

the holidays Joanne would have missed the Marriotts, mother and son, sorely, but she had little time for repining. She had never been able quite to catch up with her class in mathematics and was giving extra time to this branch, then, too, while she was now a First Class Scout, there was that goal of Golden Eaglet ahead, and she was fired with new ambition to win it before fall.

This year there was no reversal of Mrs. Selden's decision to go to Jamestown for the summer, so farewell to any hope of Joanne's for camping with her troop. To be sure Winnie, too, would be away up in Maine for the season, and had asked Joanne to visit her. So far Mrs. Selden had not favored the idea, but Joanne was not urging it, hoping that her grandmother might be brought around in course of time. In spite of prospects not altogether happy, however, Joanne was not looking forward this year with the same discontent which had marked the previous year. Weeping because things did not go her way was not to be thought of in a girl now in her sixteenth year.

"I would be thoroughly ashamed of myself if I went all to pieces," she confided to Claudia. "I think, too, Gradda is beginning to respect my years. She speaks of sixteen as quite a grown-up age. She was beginning to have beaux herself when she was seventeen, and her mother was married at that age."

"But you are not beginning to want beaux, are you?" asked Claudia slyly.

Joanne stared. "I? Heavens, no. I like my boy friends, but I should want to escape into the wilderness if any one suggested that any one of them was getting sentimental. Don't say such things, Clausie; it gives me the cold shivers."

Claudia laughed. "I'm not suggesting anything, bless your heart; I was only probing to learn where you stood. I feel just as you do."

"Grad still treats me as if I were an infant," Joanne went on, "but he takes more interest in my doings. He's different, you see. Gradda likes to talk about clothes and fancy work and society doings, but she is bored to extinction when I talk about Girl Scout stunts. She is a dear old-fashioned thing, but she isn't exactly congenial. Speaking of Girl Scouts, Clausie, I'm getting awfully discouraged about ever being a Golden Eaglet."

"Why?"

"Well, I seem to have come just so far and there I stick."

"How many tests have you still to make?"

"Three or four."

"Why don't you work on those during the summer? You'll have a chance, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, I think so. I have a lot of required reading, but that won't take all my spare time, and I did want to make a stride in math. Grad can help me, so I won't seem such a stupid when I come back in the fall. Miss Dodge told me she was afraid I couldn't

pass up with the class, but that if I chose to study for it I could take another exam. in the fall."

"Did you know Miss Dodge was not to come back next year?"

"No, I did not. Oh, Clausie, what will we do for a captain of our troop?"

"I don't know. Miss Dodge said she would see to it that we had a good one."

"Miss Chesney?"

"I hardly think so. She thinks she is too young to take the responsibility."

"Oh, dear, when things are going along so pleasantly why do we have to have changes?"

"That's what I said to my mother, and she said that change was about the only thing we could count on in this world."

Joanne considered this for a moment before she said: "There have been a lot of changes in my life within the past two years, but all have been for the better. I don't see how it can be so in Miss Dodge's case, but perhaps it will. Who knows?"

"That is the way we should look at it, of course, though I must say I hate to have any one take Miss Dodge's place. She is a fine captain and a fine teacher. It is just because of that she is going away. She has a splendid offer in another city, and feels that she must take it."

Soon after this conversation the summer holidays began and Joanne was whirled off to Jamestown. The

visit to Winnie did not materialize, but the summer was not without profit, for Joanne did most of her required reading, kept steadily to her decision of giving an hour a day to her mathematics, and under her grandfather's tutelage progressed so far that she was satisfied that she could pass her examination without any trouble. Beyond this, she made great improvement in a direction which gave her more satisfaction than anything else, for she worked hard to better her writing and spelling. She wrote to Bob and his mother on alternate weeks, and this encouragement did much to keep alive her ambition. When she became too greatly absorbed in what she was saying, her words still had a fashion of falling apart, but when she took pains they never did. With her grandfather as teacher, she learned, too, to do all those things necessary for gaining her boatswain badge, to row, pole and steer a boat, to land it and make it fast, to tell directions by sun and stars, to swim with her clothes on, to box a compass and have a knowledge of tides. She certainly could not have had a better instructor, and the two became great comrades.

"I never expected that child to be such a comfort as she is," said Dr. Selden to his wife one day. "She takes to the water like a duck and is learning to do all those things I taught her father."

"Well, you have worked hard enough to make her learn," replied his wife.

"Worked? Why, it has been the greatest fun im-

aginable. No boy could have been more companionable."

Mrs. Selden raised her eyebrows. "That's just the trouble; you want her to be like a boy, while I want her to be a young lady."

"Oh, but, my dear, look at the child. She is the picture of health, and when have you seen her fly into one of those tantrums she used to have about every other day?"

"She is not perfect yet," responded Mrs. Selden.

"Thank goodness she isn't. Who is? I should be sorry to have her turn into an angel yet a while. I want to keep her on earth while I am here."

So between a grandfather who encouraged her to be a boy and a grandmother who wished her to be a young lady, Joanne managed to remain a nice, healthy, sensible girl, by no means angelic, yet with fewer faults than might have seemed possible a few years before.

October saw her back in Washington prepared to take her last test for the crowning honor conferred upon a Golden Eaglet. She passed her tests successfully and was in a state of exaltation when the day arrived upon which she should receive her badge. As it was upon the eve of Miss Dodge's departure from the city that her last meeting with the Sunflower Troop should take place, the girls all flocked to the rally, full of regrets at losing their captain yet curious to know who would take her place. There were two

surprises in store for Joanne, of which, as yet, she had not the slightest inkling.

It was a more than usually serious group of girls who saluted their captain. Winnie, who had served her term as patrol leader, stood next to Joanne in the horseshoe line. The ceremony of saluting the flag, of pledging allegiance, of inspection being over, the girls broke ranks and the business meeting was held. After this Miss Dodge gave the order to "Fall in." There was silence while she looked over the company of sixteen girls who faced her with grave faces.

Miss Dodge broke the silence by saying, "Girls, I wanted to have you all to myself before your new captain arrives, which will be in a few minutes. Most of you have met her and I am sure you will congratulate yourselves when you see who she is. For myself I want to say that I shall never forget the happy days we have had together. I shall follow the career of each one of you with the greatest interest, and I hope that your new captain will be as proud of you as I am, that she will love you as much as I do, and that you will be loving and faithful to her and to your troop."

By this time most of the girls were in tears, Joanne among them. But presently she saw, as through a blurred mist, two or three persons entering the room. Suddenly she dashed away her tears and breathed an ecstatic exclamation of: "Oh!" She clutched Winnie's arm and whispered: "Do you suppose ——? Could it be ——?"

She stopped short, for Miss Dodge was speaking. "Dear girls," she said, "you will be happy and proud when I tell you that your new captain is to be Mrs. Marriott, whom some of you know by her stage name of Madame Risteau. I am rejoiced that she has consented to take my place, for while I am leaving the city she is coming here to live. Sunflower Troop, salute your captain."

Every hand went up in salute, and Joanne's tears melted away into smiles. Of course she was sorry to lose Miss Dodge, but to have her place taken by this dear friend more than outweighed her regrets. She longed to throw herself into her new captain's arms, but had to be satisfied with an eloquent smile in her direction.

Miss Dodge and Mrs. Marriott conferred together for a few minutes, then Miss Dodge spoke again. "I am glad that it will be Mrs. Marriott's first privilege, as captain, to bestow the honor of Golden Eaglet on two of the troop, Winifred Merryman and Joanne Selden."

The two girls went up to receive their badges, Joanne's heart beating high as Mrs. Marriott, looking down at her with very loving eyes, pinned on her badge of honor.

When the meeting was over Joanne could scarcely wait to fly to her "Muvvie," though she did linger long enough to give Winnie a little shake and cry, "Oh, Win, you never told me."

"Told you what?"

"That you had taken all your tests and would become a Golden Eaglet when I did."

Winnie laughed. "I wanted to surprise you, but I got the surprise of my life when I learned who the new captain was to be."

"Aren't you glad?"

"Of course I am. If we had to have a new captain I think we are mighty lucky to have her."

Then, while the other girls were crowding around Miss Dodge to make their farewells, she went to give her dear friend welcome. "It is so wonderful, so wonderful!" she murmured. "Like a dream. I can't believe that you and Bob are to be right here in Washington. Tell me how it happened and why I have not known it before."

"It happened very suddenly. My husband found that business interests would take him down this way, and that probably we must be here for some years, so we decided to settle it at once. I wrote to Mrs. Barry and by good fortune found we could get a house near her if we took it immediately, so we took it 'on sight unseen' and here we are. In the meantime Mrs. Barry had been talking to Miss Dodge, who is a great friend of hers, and both of them so besought me to take Miss Dodge's place as captain of your troop, that I finally consented to do so, for a time at least, so there you are."

Joanne gave a long sigh of content. "And to think

it was you, of all persons that I could have chosen, who pinned on my dear Golden Eaglet badge."

"I am very proud of my daughter," said Mrs. Marriott squeezing the hand she held.

Then it was time to leave and Joanne went home to give her news to her family and to find them interested in all she had to tell.

Of what went on after this it would take too long to tell, of the hikes and picnic suppers, the week ends at the lodge, of how Pablo continued a faithful helper at the farm, and how Unc' Aaron found a bee tree for the Boy Scouts, of how Mrs. Marriott entertained the girls in her new home, all these and other things would take another book, but as Girl Scouts all over the world are doing these and similar things, each one can turn to her own happy experiences and believe they were duplicated by Joanne and her friends.

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